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Juan Lennart Michel Romero

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**THE IRAQI REVOLUTION OF 1958 AND THE SEARCH FOR
SECURITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

Committee:

Wm. Roger Louis, Supervisor

Hafez Farmayan

Clement Henry

Mark Lawrence

Gail Minault

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by

Juan Lennart Michel Romero, B.A.; M.A.

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfilment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2008

PREFACE

This project has drawn extensively upon Arabic-language primary sources such as Iraqi and Egyptian newspapers and memoirs, and American and British diplomatic, political, and military documents. Arabic-language secondary sources have also been consulted to a great extent. These secondary sources have provided access to Arabic-language primary sources and have been of great value in that they reflect how interpretations of the primary sources have changed over time. Similarly, British and American primary sources also reflect the differences in American and British interpretations of the same Iraqi primary sources and also provide valuable insights into the American Embassy's readings of British assessments of developments in Iraq and vice versa. Occasionally these reports also reveal Anglo-American rivalry in certain areas and frustration with the policies of the other side. Furthermore, these reports also reveal to what extent London and Washington disagreed with or condoned the Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Sa'id's policies and attempted to influence him in one direction or another.

Arabic-language memoirs have been drawn upon extensively for this study. Memoirs by former members of the Free Officers movement which overthrew the Iraqi monarchy have provided particularly useful information about the structure, program, meeting procedures, and coup plans of the movement, and the massacre of the royal family on July 14, 1958. Memoirs by former Iraqi ministers in cabinets, both in the monarchic and the revolutionary eras, have also been an important source of information about how Iraqi politicians viewed the issues of the day and the development program.

Finally, transcripts from court proceedings against leading officials of the old regime published in Iraqi and Egyptian newspapers, and special economic reports also constitute especially valuable primary sources for this project. The former have been an important source in particular with regard to Nuri's policies towards Egypt and Syria. American and British economic reports written by Western experts hired by pre-revolutionary governments to assess the policies of the Development Board, and a report presented at the trial of a minister of the revolutionary era shed much light from different angles on the problems of Iraq's pre-revolutionary and revolutionary development policies.

Compared to the existing literature on the Iraqi Revolution this dissertation differs from many other works in several respects. It offers a more detailed account and analysis of the Free Officers movement, its program, its numerous coup plans, and the tension among the leading officers than most other works on the Iraqi Revolution. There are scholars who may offer a more thorough analysis of a particular aspect of the movement, but there are few works, English-language or Arabic-language, which analyze in detail so many aspects of the Free Officers movement. Another issue which this dissertation has exhaustively analyzed is the events of July 14, 1958, that is the overthrow of the monarchy, which has been examined from more angles than by many other works. A third area which other works have largely disregarded is Qasim's foreign policy, to which this dissertation devotes a whole chapter. Finally, this research project also analyzes in detail the explicit and implicit significance of the first proclamations of the revolutionary government. This study of the Iraqi Revolution draws upon sources available to other scholars as well. What sets it apart from many other works is its interpretation of the research material and some of the arguments which it advances.

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Publication No. _____

Juan Lennart Michel Romero, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2008

Supervisor: Wm. Roger Louis

This dissertation contends that a revolutionary situation built up in Iraq during the last decade of the monarchic system. Opposition to constraints on civil rights, close ties with Britain, accession to the Baghdad Pact, the semi-feudal economic system in rural areas, and the plight of the unemployed in the slums of the big cities fanned revolutionary sentiments in Iraq during the monarchic era. The ambitious development program financed with Iraq's considerable oil revenues did not address these problems, however, since the program focused on large-scale and long-term projects which did not rapidly improve the situation of the poorer strata of the population. Furthermore, external events such as the formation of the Baghdad Pact in 1955 and the Suez Crisis of 1956 directly fueled anti-regime sentiments in Iraq, since students and intellectuals contended that the

monarchy's foreign policy had contributed to these events and isolated Iraq from its Arabs neighbors. The regime managed to remain in power, however, through heavy-handed suppression of any public manifestation of political opposition. This left the army the only force in Iraqi society capable of effectuating change. The regime was convinced of the army's complete loyalty and therefore made the mistake to dismiss intelligence on coup plans.

This dissertation further argues that the Free Officers coup of July 14, 1958, was the initial phase of a social, economic, political, and psychological revolution. The fact that Baghdadis took to the streets in massive numbers on the morning of July 14 shows strong popular support for and participation in the Free Officers coup. The foreign and economic policies of the new regimes also constituted a revolutionary departure from those of the monarchy. Furthermore, the new government declared that Iraq's foreign policy would be based on the principle of neutralism, and that its economic policy would eliminate the semi-feudal system in the rural areas to build an equitable society. Iraq's decision not to withdraw from the Baghdad Pact and not to nationalize the Iraq Petroleum Company was made for security reasons, and did not signify a continuation of the policies of the previous regime.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	iv
Abstract.....	vi
List of Tables and Figures.....	ix
Note on transliteration.....	x
Introduction.....	1
1. Internal Developments Prior to the Revolution of 1958.....	17
2. Regional Security and the Baghdad Pact.....	39
3. Independent Iraq and Nuri al-Sa'id—Domestic Policy (1)	62
4. Independent Iraq and Nuri al-Sa'id—Domestic Policy (2)	88
5. Independent Iraq and Nuri al-Sa'id—Foreign Policy	110
6. The Free Officers Movement.....	136
7. The July 14 Coup and Popular Reactions	166
8. The Revolutionary State: Structure and Reforms	192
9. International Reactions to July 14, 1958.....	219
10. The Qasim Regime's Foreign Relations	244
11. Arab Unity and Disunity	268
Conclusion	295
Table 1	308
Figure 1	309
Figure 2	310
Bibliography	311
Vita.....	325

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1. Iraq's oil revenues 1950 – 1960.....	308
Figure 1. The Middle East February 1, 1958 – July 14, 1958	309
Figure 2. Iraq, July 14, 1958.....	310

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

This dissertation uses two diacritical marks to transliterate Arabic names, titles, and terms—(‘) for ‘ain and (’) for hamza. Arabic personal and geographic names familiar to the Western reader, such as Nasser and Basra have been rendered according to their commonly known form in English and not as al-Nasir and al-Basra. In order not unnecessarily to complicate the transliteration and confuse the reader no other diacritical marks have been used to distinguish between emphatic and non-emphatic consonants.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation advances the argument that a revolutionary situation developed in Iraq over the period 1948 to 1958 and that the events of July 14, 1958 were the initial phase of a social, political, economic, and psychological revolution. A general discussion of the genealogy of revolutions falls outside the purview of this study, since its focus is exclusively on the Iraqi Revolution and the forces which overthrew the monarchy. The dissertation proposes a number of criteria in order to establish whether the events of July 14 and subsequent developments in Iraq constituted a revolution.¹ The first criterion involves an analysis of the role of the Iraqi people in the execution of the Free Officers' coup on July 14. An argument to the effect that the military single-handedly carried out the coup would seriously weaken the contention that it was the initial phase of a social revolution. This dissertation clearly establishes, however, that popular participation, in particular in Baghdad, was an important element of the coup. The enormous crowds which filled the streets around key targets in the capital would have posed an obstacle to loyalists to the monarchy, had the latter decided to attack the Free Officers. Furthermore, the huge numbers of Baghdadis taking to the streets in celebration of the revolution served to discourage any attempts at a counter-revolution, since they demonstrated to loyalists and foreign powers alike that the Free Officers enjoyed the massive support of the Iraqi people. Demonstrators outside the besieged Rihab Palace actively participated in convincing the Royal Guard that the best course of action was to surrender.² Also, frequent contacts between Free Officers and leading Iraqi politicians prior to the coup

¹ The definition of a revolution discussed here to a certain extent follows that laid out by Theda Skocpol in her States & Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, & China (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1999, first published 1979).

² Falih Hanzal, Asrar Maqtali al-'Aila al-Malika [Secrets of the Murder of the Royal Family in Iraq] (n.p., second and revised edition, 1992), p. 112.

reinforce the argument that the July 14 events constituted a social revolution.³ In summary, civilian Iraqis, in particular in Baghdad, played an important role in the overthrow of the monarchy.

The second criterion applied to determine to what extent the Iraqi Revolution constituted fundamental change in Iraqi society is change in relations among social classes. The new regime made clear on the first day of the revolution that the power and influence of “imperialists” and the corrupt ruling class had been eliminated.⁴ The Free Officers reflected the sentiments among the Iraqi people at large. Most of them had a middle class background and held a rank below Brigadier. The ruling class of oligarchs had thus been replaced by a group of officers who had maintained close ties with the political opposition and now pledged to raise the standard of living for the poorer strata of the population.⁵ The status and standard of living of the poor were raised by providing housing for many of Iraq’s *sarifa* dwellers.⁶ Relations between social classes thus changed with the new policies, clearly favoring classes which had previously occupied the lowest rung on the social ladder.⁷

An analysis of the trade and economic policies of the new regime generates evidence that the role of the state in the national economy increased considerably. State

³ Hanna Batatu, The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq’s Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of its Communists, Ba’thists and Free Officers (London: Saqi Books, 2004, first published by Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1978), pp. 793-794; Majid Khadduri, Republican Iraq: A Study in Iraqi Politics Since the Revolution of 1958 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp.31-32.

⁴ 14th of July Celebration Committee 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution: One Year of Progress and Achievement (Baghdad: The Times Press, 1959), p. 7.

⁵ The new regime lowered housing rents, and reduced prices on meat, bread, fruits, and vegetables, Izvestiya, September 27, 1958

⁶ Sarifa, literally reed-mat hut, is the term used for the slums in Iraq’s larger cities.

⁷ Hanna Batatu argues that: “The social power of the greater landed sheikhs...was to a considerable extent destroyed, and the position of the urban workers and the middle- and lower-middle strata of society qualitatively enhanced. The pattern of the life of the peasants was also altered, partly by the transfer of property, and partly by the abolition of the Tribal Disputes Regulations...,” Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 807.

intervention resulted in far-reaching restrictions imposed on imported goods which could be manufactured locally, and a reorientation of foreign trade towards barter trade with socialist countries. Furthermore, the Qasim regime reduced the negative trade balance with Western powers, and encouraged trade with countries which, like Iraq, pursued neutralist policies.⁸ The most ambitious project to change Iraqi society, however, consisted in attempting to eliminate the power of the great landlords in the rural areas of Iraq by limiting the size of privately owned land. The so-called Agrarian Reform Law stipulated that confiscated land be distributed among poor peasants. The reform did not have the desired effect, however, due to the extremely time-consuming redistribution of the lands, which in turn was a result of the shortage of trained professionals to implement this complicated task.⁹

A comparison of Qasim's foreign policy with that of Nuri al-Sa'id yields a clear indication that changes in relations with foreign powers under Qasim constituted a revolutionary departure from Nuri's foreign policy. The military regime had declared on the first day of the revolution that it had put an end to the pro-West policies of the previous regime and that Iraq would thenceforth conduct a neutralist foreign policy. The socialist countries had by extending early recognition to the new Iraqi regime demonstrated that they sought to establish closer ties with the Iraqi republic. Baghdad responded favorably to these overtures, partly due to delayed Western recognition. The closer political ties with the socialist countries eventually led to closer military ties. Under Nuri Iraqi-Soviet diplomatic relations had been severed in January of 1955 in preparation for the formation of the Baghdad Pact. Iraq's reorientation of its foreign

⁸ 14th of July Celebration Committee 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution, pp. 59-60.

⁹ Rony Gabbay, Communism and Agrarian Reform in Iraq (London: Croom Helm, 1978), pp. 113-114, 116; Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 837.

policy under Qasim thus constituted a revolution. This fundamental shift did not result in a withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact until 1959, however, for reasons of national security, since Qasim feared that an immediate withdrawal from the defense organization would trigger Western economic or military retaliation. The argument that Iraq's foreign policy under Qasim changed little compared to that of Nuri is therefore not convincing, since this status quo was maintained for the aforementioned reasons and not as a result of ideological considerations.

The fifth criterion—structural change—has been used to establish whether the new Iraqi society differed to such a high degree from that of the ancien régime that it constituted a revolutionary change. July 14 resulted in a fundamental change in system of government. Proclamation No. 1, the Free Officers' first announcement broadcast to the public on Radio Baghdad, stated that Iraq had become a republic, with the Sovereignty Council headed by a president constituting the highest organ of the state. Real political power, however, was vested in the office of the prime minister, a post held by Brigadier 'Abd al-Karim Qasim. The new cabinet included members of all opposition parties and followers of all political persuasions, with the exception of supporters of the old regime. The ministers did not hold office as representatives of political parties, however, but in their capacity of private citizens, supposedly appointed due to their expertise in running a government. This attempt to appoint a cabinet reflecting so many different political ideologies was unheard of in Iraq, where politicians with leftist leanings had previously been banned from participation in the nation's political life.

Finally, the psychological impact of July 14 on Iraqis is a criterion which testifies to the perception of revolutionary change in Iraqi society.¹⁰ The sudden introduction of civil rights such as freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right to organize trade unions—although certain constraints were later unofficially imposed on the former two by virtue of social pressure and self-censorship—greatly contributed to the sense that a real revolution had taken place in Iraq. Public manifestation of opposition to official policies had previously resulted in jail terms, dismissal from work, or expulsion from university. The aforementioned civil liberties, demonstrations organized by political parties and other organizations, and the efforts in official quarters to improve the lot of the poor, such as price and rent reductions, created a sense of empowerment among poor Iraqis, since their interests had played no significant role under the previous regime. The psychological impact discussed above also allowed Iraqis to identify with the state, a sentiment which had been almost completely non-existent outside the narrow circle of urban oligarchs and tribal shaikhs in the Nuri era.

The above analysis of the criteria used to establish the revolutionary nature of change in Iraq in 1958 shows that the July 14 coup was the initial phase of a social, economic, political, and psychological revolution. Critics of this conclusion will emphasize aspects of the revolution which were not implemented successfully or which were only temporary. These critics will also point to policies which did not undergo radical change, such as the delayed official withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact, or the fact that the new

¹⁰ Skocpol does not discuss this criterion in her States & Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, & China.

regime did not nationalize the Iraq Petroleum Company.¹¹ Such criticism obviously does not take into account the underlying national security aspects of these policies. Furthermore, the psychological dimension should not be underestimated, since the perception among Iraqis of Qasim's revolutionary credentials were necessary to keep his regime in power. Iraqis saw tangible change in society even if the revolution was beset with many problems. This combined with the early nationwide enthusiasm for the overthrow of the monarchy contributed to creating a revolutionary atmosphere in Iraq. The first proclamations of the new regime testify to the importance which Qasim attributed to the maintenance of this popular perception.

This dissertation further argues that Arab nationalism and the efforts to achieve Arab unity were the principal cultural and political ideas permeating Iraqi society in the 1950s. These ideas operated both at the transnational and the national levels and had two major consequences. The first result of Arab nationalism in the political landscape of Iraq was anti-Western sentiments and revolution as analyzed above. The second consequence was unity and disunity. In Iraq the nationalist response to what was perceived as past and present Western imperialism, in particular in the form of the Baghdad Pact and economic, primarily oil interests, caused revolutionary sentiments among the population to increase between 1948 and 1958.¹² These sentiments eventually erupted in the Free Officers coup on July 14, 1958.¹³

¹¹ Iraq did not withdraw officially from the Baghdad Pact until March of 1959. The Company's Kirkuk oil field concession and installations were nationalized on June 1, 1972, and the remaining foreign oil interests in Iraq in 1975.

¹² In 1948 violent anti-British demonstrations against the unpopular Anglo-Iraqi Portsmouth Treaty caused the Iraqi Parliament to reject the Treaty.

¹³ Mahmoud Haddad has advanced a partly similar argument with respect to Mesopotamian opposition to the central Ottoman authorities based on their inability to protect the three provinces of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul against British economic and political influence in the early twentieth century, Mahmoud Haddad, "Iraq Before World War I: A Case of Anti-European Arab Ottomanism," in Rashid Khalidi et al.,

In addition to the argument laid out on the first six pages above, that the events of July 14, 1958 constituted a revolution, this research project also contends that the efforts to achieve Arab unity resulted in disunity. Furthermore, the Iraqi Free Officers executed the revolution in the context of Arab nationalism and unity, which also served as a direct catalyst for the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy. Had the Jordanian part of the Iraqi-Jordanian Arab Union not experienced the destabilizing effects in early July of the efforts to realize Arab unity, the Iraqi Army would not have taken action against the Nuri regime on July 14. An order to deploy to Jordan enabled two brigades to occupy key positions in the Iraqi capital and overthrow the Iraqi monarchy on the morning of July 14. Like the efforts by both the Iraqi monarchy and the United Arab Republic to achieve Arab unity before the Iraqi Revolution destabilized the Arab Union, these attempts also caused deep divisions in Iraqi society after the revolution, owing to competing interpretations of Arab unity among military officers, party activists, and Iraqi intellectuals.

The two forces of Arab unity and revolution also formed the overarching social and intellectual framework for Iraqi society in the 1950s. Both forces operated throughout the 1950s causing revolutionary sentiments to grow over the decade and also continued profoundly to affect the direction the Iraqi Revolution took. The power struggle between proponents of *qawmiyya* and *wataniyya* clearly distracted from the important task of building an equitable society for all Iraqis, which the revolutionaries had promised the

eds., The Origins of Arab Nationalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 120-121. The principal difference between the two arguments, however, is that unlike the early twentieth century when merchants formed a vocal opposition to British penetration, highly politicized intellectuals and students constituted the driving force behind the opposition to Nuri's pro-British policies in the 1950s.

country.¹⁴ Arab unity also destabilized the United Arab Republic and eventually led to Syria's secession from the union in 1961.

The idea of Arab unity, an integral part of Arab nationalism, was embraced both by Iraqi leaders of the monarchic era such as Nuri al-Sa'id, and the revolutionary leader 'Abd al-Karim Qasim. The Arab nationalism and unity advocated by Nuri differed, however, from that promoted by Qasim, despite both leaders' focus on Iraqi interests. Paradoxically enough, both men's efforts, although fundamentally different in certain respects, produced similar effects: a sharp polarization of political forces in Iraq and the Arab world, with ensuing disunity as a lasting result. This disunity occurred due to another competing brand of Arab unity advocated by the Egyptian President Gamal 'Abdul Nasser, who emphasized Egypt's leading role in uniting the Arab world.¹⁵

The Arab nationalist movement was not a cohesive force and this was particularly the case in Iraq in the 1950s. This circumstance created tension within the country and between Iraq on the one hand, and Egypt and Syria on the other. The reason for this state of affairs was the polarization of political forces operating in Iraqi society, with the intellectuals' brand of Arab nationalism conflicting with Nuri's concept of the Fertile Crescent, a federation of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine under Iraqi leadership. Despite the lack of cohesion and unity among proponents of Arab nationalists,

¹⁴ Qawmiyya is usually translated as Arab nationalism, which implies the political concept of pan-Arabism, that is, a single state for all Arabs. The term wataniyya, however, denotes nationalism focused on one state, and the priority of the interests of this state over those of the pan-Arab state.

¹⁵ In this context, it is worth mention that Nasser initially had serious concerns about a Syrian-Egyptian merger into the United Arab Republic in 1958, which is an indication of Nasser's caution with respect to the single-state concept of pan-Arabism, Malcolm Kerr, The Arab Cold War: Gamal 'Abdul Nasser and His Rivals, 1958-1970 (New York: Oxford University Press, third edition, 1971), p. 11. Furthermore, Nasser's reaction during a meeting in Syria in the first days after the Iraqi Revolution with Qasim's deputy 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif when the latter suggested immediate Iraqi-U.A.R. merger was to advice 'Arif to wait, Riyadh Taha, Qissat al-Wahda wa al-Infisal: Tajribat Insan 'Arabi Khilal Ahdath 1955-1961 (Bairut: Dar al-Afaq al-Jadida, 1974), p. 141.

this idea was nevertheless a powerful driving force behind many of the major developments in Iraq and the Arab world in the middle of the twentieth century, determining Iraq's domestic policies as well as Baghdad's relations with other Arab states, with Western powers, and with the socialist countries.

Although widely embraced as an abstract concept and ideal by many Iraqis and ordinary citizens in the Arab world, the idea of Arab unity and the intensified efforts to realize it, paradoxically enough generated increased disunity within Iraq and between Iraq and certain other Arab states.¹⁶ The enthusiasm for Arab unity peaked in 1958 with the merger of Egypt and Syria into the United Arab Republic on February 1, 1958. The proclamation of the Syrian-Egyptian Republic caused great alarm in ruling circles in Amman and Baghdad, and fears that this propaganda victory for Nasser would turn Jordanians and Iraqis against their monarchic regimes.¹⁷ The former Finance Minister

¹⁶ Such disunity had a long tradition in Iraq. In the 1930s the political discourse between followers of the idea of *qawmiyya*, usually translated as Arab nationalism, which in turn implied the political concept of pan-Arabism, that is, a single state for the Arabs, and the proponents of the idea of *wataniyya*, who emphasized the importance of Iraq over that of the pan-Arab ideal, caused a political split of Iraqi intellectuals in two camps, pan-Arab nationalists, adherents of *qawmiyya*, and the Ahali movement, advocates of *wataniyya*, Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, p. 297. Also, it is clear from the Iraqi primary school curriculum that the distinction between *qawmiyya* and *wataniyya* was drawn as early as in the beginning of the 1920s, Amatzia Baram, "A Case of Imported Identity: The Modernizing Secular Ruling Elites of Iraq and the Concept of Mesopotamian-Inspired Territorial Nationalism, 1922-1992," *Poetics Today* 15, 2 (1994), p. 289, referred to in Peter Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism: Authoritarian, totalitarian, and pro-fascist inclinations, 1932-1941* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 6.

The distinction Arab nationalists make between the two concepts of *qawmiyya* and *wataniyya* normally implies a higher degree of desirability of the former for *al-umma al-'arabiyya*, the Arab nation, than that of the latter. The frequently negative connotations in the context of the Arab nationalist discourse of a third term, *iqlimiyya*, regionalism, confirms the higher status of *qawmiyya* as a goal for the Arab nation. From this conceptual differentiation does not follow, however, that the two terms are mutually exclusive, as evidenced by 'Abd al-Karim Qasim's simultaneous acceptance of *qawmiyya* and pan-Arabism as guidelines for certain policies such as foreign and defense policies and advocacy of *wataniyya* as the main principle for Iraq's domestic policies.

¹⁷ There were obvious grounds for these fears: The proclamation of the United Arab Republic caused resentment among many educated Iraqis against the ruling circles in their country, since the former regarded these circles as an impediment to the realization of the dream of Arab unity, a fact which would isolate Iraq from the rest of the Arab world, 'Abd al-Karim al-'Uzri, *Tarikh fi Dhikrayat al-'Iraq 1930-1958* [History in Reminiscences of Iraq] (Bairut: Markaz al-Abjadiyya li al-Saff al-Taswiri, 1982), p. 544. A congratulatory telegram from Iraqi intellectuals and politicians in defiance of Nuri al-Sa'id on the occasion of the proclamation of the United Arab Republic, testifies to the sentiments among Iraqis at the time, Fikrat

‘Abd al-Karim al-’Uzri writes in his memoirs that he found Crown Prince ‘Abd al-Ilah in “a state of great agitation and alarm” at the news of the proclamation of the United Arab Republic. The Crown Prince was full of pessimism and told al-’Uzri that the Syrian-Egyptian union was an unnatural creation and that it would not last for a number of reasons, the most important of which was the geographic separation of the two regions. He also said that the union “nevertheless constituted a serious challenge to Iraq and a threat to its existence.”¹⁸ Considering this fear, the United Arab Republic could not boost Arab unity, but only result in Arab disunity. Therefore, such an interpretation of the proclamation of the United Arab Republic left the rulers in Amman and Baghdad little choice but to form a rival Arab Union two weeks after the Syrian-Egyptian merger in hopes of avoiding destabilization of their countries.

The reasons for the division over the issue of Arab unity within the Arab ranks were the fundamental difference between Nasser’s and Nuri’s interpretations of Arab unity, the British presence in the Middle East, and the pro-British policies of Nuri. In the prime minister’s mind Arab unity was to be realized under the leadership of Iraq, preferably excluding political rivals such as Nasser and reducing their influence over Arab public

Namiq ‘Abd al-Fattah, Siyasat al-’Iraq al-Kharijiyya fi al-Mantaqa al-’Arabiyya, 1953-1958 [Iraq’s Foreign Policy in the Arab Region, 1953-1958] (Baghdad: Dar al-Rashid li al-Nashr, 1981), pp. 214-215. Conversely, Iraqis received the news of the formation of the Arab Union with indifference, Isma’il Ahmad Yaghi, Al-’Alaqat al-’Iraqiyya al-Urdunniyya, 1941-1958 [Iraqi-Jordanian Relations, 1941-1958] (Al-Qahira: Dar al-Sahwa li al-Nashr, 1988), p. 55.

¹⁸ Al-’Uzri, Tarikh fi Dhikrayat al-’Iraq, p. 550. ‘Abd al-Ilah’s words, as al-’Uzri quotes the Crown Prince, appear somewhat contradictory. If he was convinced that the Syrian-Egyptian union would not last very long, why then be in a state of great agitation? Despite his words, he most likely thought that the United Arab Republic would last long enough to seriously destabilize Iraq. Interpreted in this way ‘Abd al-Ilah’s prediction was prophetic in two ways: the monarchy was overthrown five and a half months later and the United Arab Republic was dissolved in 1961 following Syria’s secession.

‘Abd al-Ilah’s efforts to persuade Iraq’s Baghdad Pact allies not to recognize the United Arab Republic corroborates al-’Uzri’s impression that the Crown Prince was in a highly agitated state, ‘Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani, Tarikh al-Wizarat al-’Iraqiyya [The History of Iraqi Cabinets] (Sida: al-’Irfan, 1968), vol. x, p. 202.

opinion.¹⁹ Conversely, to the latter Arab unity meant unity under Egyptian leadership and the elimination of the Western military presence in the region. This argument does not go as far as invalidating the claim that the strong Western presence in Iraq contributed to sowing seeds of discord among the Arabs thus constituting an obstacle to Arab unity.²⁰ The case of Iraq demonstrates clearly, however, that despite the strong British presence in monarchic Iraq, Iraqis such as Nuri al-Sa‘id, who cooperated closely with the British, had their own reasons for opposing closer ties with their ideological opponent and rival for leadership in the Arab world, the President of Egypt and later of the United Arab Republic, Gamal ‘Abdul Nasser.

¹⁹ Nuri was thus no stranger to pan-Arab ideas, a fact which was probably reinforced by his habit to think in strategic terms, although his Fertile Crescent project would not be open to Arab states with leftist or revolutionary governments. Republics such as Syria would be welcomed to accede, most likely because Nuri hoped to install a king in Damascus. In certain respects, Nuri’s pan-Arabism was therefore similar to that of Nasser. Both men promoted qawmiyya ideals for wataniyya purposes, that is, Iraq and Egypt respectively played the leading role in their Arab unity projects. This state of affairs corroborates Abu Khaldun Sati‘ al-Husri’s argument regarding the tension in the Arab world between the ideal of qawmiyya and the individual considerations of wataniyya in different Arab states. The focus of the concept of qawmiyya is on one Arab nation, whereas the reality is that this nation is made up of a large number of independent states. Each state pursues its separate wataniyya and exerts itself to strengthen it. At the same time, the objective of qawmiyya, which transcends the borders of the individual Arab states, is to create a common spiritual bond among these states and unite them in one shape or another, Abu Khaldun Sati‘ al-Husri, Abhath Mukhtara fi al-Qawmiyya al-‘Arabiyya [Selected Studies in Arab Nationalism] (Bairut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-‘Arabiyya, Silsila al-Tarath al-Qawmiyya, al-A‘mal al-qawmiyya li Sati‘ al-Husri, IV, wa Dar al-Mustaqbal al-‘Arabi, 1985, first published in 1964), p. 24.

²⁰ Al-Husri, the foremost Arab nationalist theoretician, clearly linked the contemporary division in the Arab world to Western imperialism: “The Arab states which exist today were not created as a result of the wish of the people. They were created as a consequence of agreements and treaties concluded by states which divided the Arab nation and assumed control over it. Also, the borders separating the Arab states were not determined in accordance with the interests of the Arab nation and its members...The differences which we now see between the Arab states...are largely a legacy of the treaties of occupation,” Abu Khaldun Sati‘ al-Husri: Al-‘Uruba Awwalan [Arabness First] (Bairut: Dar al-‘Ilm li’l-Malayin, fifth edition, 1965), p. 13. Like al-Husri, Michel ‘Aflaq, the most prominent theoretician of the Syrian Ba‘th Party, emphasized Arab unity in his writings, arguing that Western imperialism was a major impediment to this unity. ‘Aflaq argued that Zionism constituted the other main obstacle to Arab unity, Mishil ‘Aflaq: Ma‘rakat al-Masir al-Wahid [The Battle for a Unique Destiny] (Bairut: Al-Mu‘assasa al-‘Arabiyya li’l-Dirasat wa al-Nashr, fourth revised and expanded edition, June 1972), p. 45. ‘Aflaq’s argument regarding the reasons for the divisions in the Arab world, however, was more nuanced than that of al-Husri, laying part of the blame for Arab division on the Arabs themselves. The former contended that: “The threat to the Arab nation from imperialism, Zionism, and Israel is based on conspiratorial reactionary forces in the Arab world,” ‘Aflaq: Ma‘rakat, p. 177. The emphasis here is on the threat to Arab societies emanating from within and obviously refers to the Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Sa‘id’s pro-British policies. Iraq’s position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, however, cannot be characterized in any way as pro-Israel, although Nuri took a more pragmatic stance than ‘Aflaq on this issue.

It is difficult to maintain that Western imperialism was responsible for Arab disunity after the Iraqi Revolution. The reason is, of course, that the British presence had been greatly reduced in Iraq, and neither London nor Washington possessed any effective means to influence Prime Minister 'Abd al-Karim Qasim's policies.²¹ During the first few months following the Revolution U.A.R.-Iraqi relations grew ever closer. At the same time there were no signs that the new leader in Baghdad intended to become Nasser's disciple or allow the latter to influence Iraqi domestic policies. This tendency would become more obvious over time.

The Iraqi Revolution thus appeared to have ushered in an era of close U.A.R.-Iraqi cooperation. What initially looked like a genuine rapprochement between the United Arab Republic and Iraq, however, was replaced with cooler relations in late fall following the Deputy Prime Minister 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif's fall from grace in September 1958 and arrest in November, only to be followed by an intense propaganda war between the two republics, and U.A.R. involvement in a coup attempt against Qasim in March of 1959. As a result, over the period of nine months U.A.R.-Iraqi relations deteriorated radically, even to the extent that the hostility between Cairo and Baghdad became more intense than it had been in the Nuri era. How could relations between two supposedly revolutionary governments deteriorate to such a degree? The reasons for this development were contradictory interpretations of Arab unity at the national Iraqi level.

Qasim and his deputy 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif represented different aspects of Arab nationalism. Qasim advocated an Arab nationalism which was a combination of *qawmiyya*, the ultimate goal of which was a single state for all Arabs, and *wataniyya*, a

²¹ Britain could have applied economic pressure, which would, however, have hurt not only Iraqi but British interests as well. Furthermore, such pressure would only have increased Qasim's recalcitrance and his dependence on Soviet aid.

form of nationalism which advocated retention of full national sovereignty for individual Arab states with respect to domestic policies. Conversely, 'Arif was the most prominent proponent of qawmiyya and Arab unity. During his short career as second in command in Baghdad he exerted himself to bring about Iraqi accession to the Syrian-Egyptian union. Qasim's interpretation of Arab unity differed from both that of Nuri and that of Nasser, since Qasim neither strove for Iraqi preeminence in the Arab world nor displayed any interest in attempting to influence other Arab states in one direction or another.²² 'Arif's position on unity, however, differed from that of Nasser in as much as the former did not necessarily envision a leading role for Iraq in the Arab world and would have been satisfied with occupying the position of Nasser's lieutenant. 'Arif thus took a stance on Arab unity which to a certain extent resembled that of the Syrians prior to the proclamation of the United Arab Republic. Conversely, Qasim's speeches reveal that he was prepared to cooperate closely with the United Arab Republic in the areas of foreign, defense, and educational policies. He would have accepted a federation with the United Arab Republic provided that Iraq had been guaranteed full sovereignty in internal affairs.²³

Developments in the Syrian region of the United Arab Republic most likely further strengthened Qasim's misgivings about the wisdom of acceding to the United Arab Republic. Nasser's announcement of the first U.A.R. cabinet in October 1958 clearly indicated Syria's status as the junior partner in the Arab Republic. Only fourteen Syrians were appointed ministers out of a total of thirty-four cabinet members, with all key

²² Ambassador Michael Wright to the Foreign Office, August 9, 1958, no. 1346, Confidential, FO371/134201; 14th July Celebrations Committee, 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 104. Qasim had denounced such policies of the previous regime as imperialist.

²³ 14th July Celebrations Committee, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 9.

ministries going to Egyptians. Syrians' discontent with their diminishing influence over policies in their region spread among Ba'thists and military officers, the two groups which had most strongly advocated union with Egypt in February 1958.²⁴ Ironically enough, the person who had more or less forced the merger upon the Syrian government, Syria's Chief of Staff General 'Afif al-Bizri, was so embittered after his removal by Nasser from this position that he sent a message to Qasim, urging him not to accede to the United Arab Republic in order to avoid meeting the same fate as the Syrians, who had already lost their independence.²⁵ Syria's former president, Shukri al-Quwatli, another prominent Syrian who had contributed to the Syrian-Egyptian merger into the Arab Republic later expressed his disappointment with the union claiming that the Egyptians had "tramp[le]d on the honour and dignity of citizens," and "unleashed a class struggle" in order to maintain their rule.²⁶ Such testimonies from individuals instrumental in the forming of the Syrian-Egyptian union must have been regarded by Qasim as a vindication of his decision not to join the United Arab Republic.

Despite the differences between the pan-Arab ideal of one Arab state and Qasim's policies, he accepted the former in an Iraqi context. Iraq's diverse ethnic and religious composition somewhat resembled the lack of unity in the Arab world with its many individual states. What Qasim did was to apply the idea of qawmiyya to the Iraqi wataniyya context. The Iraqi Revolution had shown that Nuri had failed to create a united Iraqi society and state, which all Iraqis felt they were part of. With this in mind Qasim set

²⁴ Al-Ahram (Cairo), November 17, 1961, referred to in Adeed Dawisha, Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 223; Dawisha, p. 224.

²⁵ Taha, Qissat al-Wahda wa al-Infisal, p. 141.

²⁶ Kerr, The Arab Cold War, p. 34.

out to create a united Iraq for all Iraqis, not just the wealthiest stratum of the population.²⁷ Therefore, in a sense he applied the ideal of Arab unity to the social and political realities in Iraq simultaneously, however, emphasizing pan-Arab unity in areas which would not interfere with his project to realize Iraqi unity.

In summary, participation of the Iraqi capital's population in the July 14 coup testifies to the extent to which Baghdadis embraced nationalist ideas. Furthermore, the massive popular support for and participation in the events of July 14 made these a coup far from exclusively executed by the Iraqi military, and also reveal that these events were the initial phase of what would prove to be a social, political, economic, and psychological revolution. Third, as to the revolutionary Iraqi regime's subsequent policies, both domestic and foreign policies constituted such a radical departure from those of the previous regime that they can be termed a revolution, even though they were not always successful. Finally, it was the perception of ordinary Iraqis, in particular the poorer strata of the population, that Qasim's radical departure from the previous regime's policies due to the lifting of constraints on civil rights and the new regime's focus on raising the standard of living for the poor majority of Iraqis had given them a voice in the political life of the nation.

The above analysis has also focused on the concept of Arab unity, the question to what degree it influenced domestic and foreign policies and generated disunity, and how Nuri's and Qasim's interpretations of this concept differed. The strong British military and economic presence in Iraq constituted one reason among others for the disunity in which the efforts to realize Arab unity resulted prior to the Iraqi Revolution. Following

²⁷ Abdul Karim Qassim, Principles of 14th July Revolution, Baghdad: The Times Press, n.d., p. 5.

the Revolution, however, British policies in Iraq can hardly be blamed for having such a detrimental influence on Arab unity. During this period Arab disunity was a result of the struggle between two different interpretations of the concept of unity in Iraq and President Nasser's interference in this struggle.

INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS PRIOR TO THE REVOLUTION IN 1958

This chapter will analyze the economic, social, and political situation in Iraq in the middle of the 1950s, and to what extent the internal situation in Iraq reflected Western policies towards the Middle East in general and Nasser in particular, and the perceived threat of Nasserism and communism. This approach is important, since it will establish to what extent Iraq was directly involved in or isolated from transnational policies and issues prevalent in the Middle East in the 1950s, and what role these forces played in fanning revolutionary sentiments in Iraq. Finally, the analysis will also address the question of why the considerable oil revenues invested in development projects failed to prevent the Iraqi Revolution. Was the Nuri regime alone to blame for this failure, or were foreign experts also responsible for the direction of the development program?

Ideologies and Propaganda

The Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955 resulted in a surge of neutralism in the Middle East.²⁸ The proceedings at the Conference dominated front pages and editorials of the Iraqi press, and were seen as a renaissance for the Afro-Asian nations with the concomitant criticism of the West and the white man expressed in Iraqi

²⁸ Interestingly enough, Dulles attempted to dissuade Nasser from attending the Conference, Mohamed Haykal, Nasser: The Cairo Documents (London: New English Library, 1972), pp. 56-57. There is no evidence, however, that the Secretary of State exercised similar pressure on Iraq not to send a representative to Bandung.

newspapers.²⁹ Neutralist ideas, however, had circulated among intellectuals, students, and the National Democratic Party, the Popular Front, and the Istiqlal Party since the early days of the Cold War, fuelled by widespread anti-British sentiments and leftist ideologies.³⁰ This criticism also targeted the United States since it was Britain's ally and the main supporter of Israel. As a result of increased East-West tension during the Korean War, the Iraqi press had printed articles in 1950 and 1951 emphasizing the need for a third, neutralist power with which the Arabs could align themselves.³¹ Neutralist ideas in the Iraqi context did thus not originate with the Bandung Conference, but were only reinforced by it.

Views on and interpretations of the concept of neutralism, or nonalignment which became the preferred term in the early 1960s, differed greatly.³² A Soviet scholar, for instance, argued that the socialist countries had shown non-Western societies the way by “demonstrat[ing] the possibility of applying in practice the principles of equality, fraternal cooperation and comradely assistance among free peoples.”³³ This in turn had led to the emergence in 1946-1947, during the Indian struggle for independence, of the concept of nonalignment as formulated by India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.³⁴ Nehru had invited leaders from Asian countries, including Arab politicians and

²⁹ US Air Attaché Baghdad to the Department of the Air Force, April 23, 1955, Confidential, 787.00(W)/4-2355; Hashim S. H. Behbehani, The Soviet Union and Arab Nationalism, 1917-1966 (London and New York: KPI, 1986), p. 133.

³⁰ Mack (Baghdad) to Bevin, no. 13, January 24, 1951, FO/371/91636, referred to in Michael Eppel, Iraq From Monarchy to Tyranny: From the Hashimites to the Rise of Saddam, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2004), p. 126; Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 681; Beeley, Baghdad, to Eden, no. 198, December 3, 1951, FO/371/91634, in Eppel, Iraq, p. 127.

³¹ Eppel, Iraq, pp. 126-127

³² Fayez A. Sayegh, ed., The Dynamics of Neutralism in the Arab World: A Symposium (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1964), p. 2.

³³ Yuri Alimov, The Rise and Growth of the Non-aligned Movement (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1987), p. 12.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

officials from Asian Soviet republics to a conference held at New Delhi in March of 1947, at which Nehru had emphasized that Asian countries must “stand on their own legs” and “have their own policies in world affairs.”³⁵ In the context of the Cold War conflict, such statements were viewed with suspicion by American policymakers owing to their conviction that the non-communist world must present a united front against the Soviet Union and its allies. On June 9, 1956, John Foster Dulles had voiced his concern about non-alignment by stating that “ [t]he principle of neutrality is an immoral and short-sighted conception.”³⁶ Given the strong neutralist sentiments and opposition to the Baghdad Pact in Iraq and elsewhere in the Arab world, Dulles’s own statement must be regarded as myopic.

A statement by the Egyptian President Gamal ‘Abdul Nasser reflects the deep chasm between the West and views held by Arab intellectuals and a number of Arab leaders: “Our policy...is one of Arab nationalism, non-alignment, positive neutrality, the liquidation of spheres of influence...”³⁷ The formation of the Baghdad Pact in 1955 had reinforced neutralist sentiments in the Arab world, and the subsequent Israeli raid on Gaza were linked to one another by Arab public opinion, and interpreted as punishment by the West for Egyptian opposition to the Baghdad Pact.³⁸ Furthermore, the position of the nonaligned countries which participated in the Bandung Conference held in Indonesia between April 18 and 24, 1955, shortly after the Israeli attack, enhanced the standing of

³⁵ Two Decades of Non-Alignment. Documents of the Gatherings of the Non-Aligned Countries, 1961-1982 (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 1983), p. 533, referred to in Alimov, The Rise and Growth of the Non-Aligned Movement, p. 29.

³⁶ Erskine B. Childers, The Road to Suez (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1962), p. 125, quoted in Sayegh, ed., The Dynamics of Neutralism in the Arab World, p. 136.

³⁷ Gamal ‘Abdul Nasser, On Non-alignment (Cairo: Ministry of National Guidance, 1964), p. 4, quoted in Prithwis Dutta, Neutralism: (Theory & Practice) With Special Reference to India, Burma, Ceylon, Egypt & Ghana, (Calcutta: The World Press Private Limited, 1978), p. 162.

³⁸ Sayegh, ed., The Dynamics of Neutralism in the Arab World, pp. 116, 180. Over thirty Egyptian soldier were killed in the raid.

neutralism in Iraq. The nonaligned participants in the Conference interpreted it as a manifestation of “ collective resistance to imperialism,” a position which could in the eyes of Iraqi, Egyptian, and Syrian intellectuals easily be applied to the situation in the Middle East.³⁹ Finally, the Conference had declared that one of its principles was “abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defence to serve particular interests of any of the big powers,” which was exactly what Iraqi intellectuals had advocated several years prior to the Conference.⁴⁰

Egyptian propaganda facilitated the dissemination of neutralism, but neutralist tendencies among Iraqi intellectuals and politicians testify to the strong opposition to Nuri’s policies which aimed at firmly aligning Iraq in the Western camp militarily, politically, and economically. The political opposition was not, however, completely united. Many from Nuri’s own generation and representatives of his own class largely opposed his pro-British foreign policy, whereas the younger generation’s opposition mainly stemmed from its strong dissatisfaction with the slow economic progress in the country.⁴¹ In addition to the above opposition Nuri also had to counter propaganda broadcasts by Egyptian radio. This was no easy task, however, since Nasser could actually point to convincing achievements which Nuri would never be in a position to benefit from without a fundamental policy shift. By signing an evacuation treaty with the British in 1954 Nasser had taken effective measures to considerably reduce British influence in the Middle East since the treaty stipulated the withdrawal of all British

³⁹ Chitta Biswas (Deputy Secretary General), The Relevance of Bandung: Thirtieth Anniversary of the Bandung Conference (Cairo: The Permanent Secretariat of the Afro-Asian Peoples’ Solidarity Organisation, 1985), p. 3.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 43.

⁴¹ Michael Ionides, Divide And Lose: The Arab Revolt of 1955-1958 (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1960), p. 119. One could add another reason to the two mentioned by Ionides, namely the constraints on civil liberties in Iraq. Both groups took a united stance on this issue and for the same reason: Nuri deprived them of political participation.

troops from Egyptian soil.⁴² It is not surprising therefore that the Egyptian Sawt al-‘Arab radio station had a faithful audience in Iraq, since Nuri had apparently taken steps in the opposite direction by signing the Turco-Iraqi Pact in February 1955, thereby acceding to the Baghdad Pact, and by retaining the close Anglo-Iraqi ties with the signing of the Special Agreement between the two countries in April 1955.⁴³

Nuri took the perceived threat of communism to the monarchy seriously, in particular since leftist ideas appealed to Iraqi students. By 1954 as many as 85 percent of “students of secondary and higher institutions of learning belonged to the General Association of Iraqi Students, known to be a Communist front organization.”⁴⁴ Nuri was concerned about communist propaganda, since it appeared to target especially the Baghdad Pact, of which many Iraqis were critical.⁴⁵ Examples of other communist activities were participation in strikes at the British air base al-Habbaniyya and in Basra port, both locations political targets owing to the strong British presence, and incitement of students to organize strikes in support of Algeria in October 1956.⁴⁶ The Communist Party of Iraq

⁴² The last British soldier left Egypt on June 28, 1956, Aryeh Yodfat, Arab Politics in the Soviet Mirror (Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1973), p. 39.

⁴³ Ionides, Divide and Lose, p. 133. Sawt al-‘Arab was an important part of Nasser’s plan for the liberation of the Arab lands. He realized the value of a propaganda instrument to incite the Arab masses in the struggle “against imperialism and its agents,” Shahada Fathi al-Dib, ‘Abd al-Nasir wa Tahrir al-Mashriq al-‘Arabi [Abdel Nasser and the Liberation of the Arab East] (al-Qahira: Markaz al-Dirasat al-Siyasiyya wa al-Istratijiyya, 2000), p. 188.

⁴⁴ Rony Gabbay, Communism and Agrarian Reform in Iraq (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p. 58.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 59. The Communist Party of Iraq’s promises of bread and land to the people, its criticism of corruption, and its pledge to fight poverty and ignorance also contributed to “certain popularity even outside of communist circles,” Gallman to Department of State, April 26, 1955, Despatch 522, Top Secret, 787.5/4-2655. Subject: Threat of Communist Subversion in Iraq and Recommendations Re Possible Steps to Support Counter-Measures.

⁴⁶ Mahmud ‘Abd al-Fattah, Zahirat ‘Adam al-Istiqrar al-Siyasiyy fi al-‘Iraq [Political Instability in Iraq], Risalat Majistir Ghaira Manshura Muqaddama ila Kulliyat al-Iqtisad wa al-‘Ulum al-Siyasiyya, Jami‘at al-Qahira, 1973 [unpublished master’s thesis submitted to the School of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University] p. 180, referred to in Muhammad Kazim ‘Ali, Al-‘Iraq fi ‘Ahd ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim: Dirasat fi al-Quwa al-Siyasiyya wa al-Sira’ al-Idiuluji 1958-1963 [Iraq in the ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim Era: A Study in Political Force and Ideological Struggle 1958-1963] (Baghdad: Maktab al-Yaqza al-‘Arabiyya, 1989), p. 71.

had approximately 5,000 members by 1953-1954, and was considered a large party, since the number of organized members of political parties typically did not exceed a few hundred.⁴⁷ In mid-1956 the opposition, including the Communist Party, decided to form a United National Front, thus constituting a credible challenge to Nuri, with a program including complete political and economic independence, abolition of the Baghdad Pact, withdrawal from the Sterling area, guarantees of democratic rights and civil liberties, Arab solidarity against imperialism and Zionism, and cooperation with the socialist countries. This program testifies to the prominent role of socialist parties in the Front.⁴⁸ Furthermore, it illustrates why Nuri found the political opposition so dangerous to the regime: his own political program was the direct opposite of that of the United National Front, which was highly appealing to Iraqi intellectuals and students.

The American Embassy's reports reflect an optimistic assessment of the Iraqi government's suppression of leftist activities, and a concern about Iraqi nationalism. The Embassy estimated in April 1955 the membership of the Communist Party of Iraq at 2,000 with the numbers possibly reaching 10,000-12,000 if "friends, supporters, and sympathizers" were included.⁴⁹ American analysts in the Embassy also assessed that the Iraqi government had been successful in its campaign against leftist groups. As a result

⁴⁷ Ittihad al-Sha'b, September 18, 1958, referred to in Gabbay, Communism, p. 64. The Communist Party enjoyed widespread popularity among Iraq's minorities, and 15-20 percent of the membership was made up of Kurds and Armenians, Gallman to the Department of State, April 26, 1955, Despatch 522, Top Secret, 787.5/4-2655. Subject: Threat of Communist Subversion in Iraq and Recommendations Re Possible Steps to Support Counter-Measures.

⁴⁸ Ittihad al-Sha'b, July 13, September 15, October 3, 1956; June 4, November 11, 1957, referred to in Gabbay, Communism, p. 59.

⁴⁹ Gallman to Department of State, April 26, 1955, Despatch no. 522, Top Secret, 787.5/4-2655. Subject: Threat of Communist Subversion in Iraq and Recommendations Re Possible Steps to Support Indigenous Counter-Measures. The Director of the United States Information Agency's Office of Research and Intelligence estimated in 1957 that the membership of the Iraqi communist party did not exceed 3,000. In comparison, the membership of the Egyptian party was believed to be the same, and that of the communist party of Syria and Lebanon approximately 18,000, Henry Loomis, "The Soviet Propaganda Campaign in the Middle East: Themes and Methods," in New Look at the Middle East, edited by William Sands (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1957), p. 20.

the influence of the Communist Party had allegedly been greatly reduced. The contacts of communist leaders with the Free Officers and the organizing activities of the Party on the first day of the revolution, however, partly belie this impression. American diplomats were also concerned about nationalism, since it

with varying degrees of intensity, affects the larger part of the Iraqi populace. Generally speaking, it has operated on the a priori assumption that foreign influence—in the case of Iraq, usually British—is primarily responsible for the various ills which beset the country and for the frustration of Arab aspirations.⁵⁰

The claim that nationalists blamed the Western powers for the problems in the Middle East and in Iraq is confirmed by many Iraqi works. According to two scholars the Iraqi trade policy favored British interests and “monopolistic companies.”⁵¹ The above report reveals that American diplomats were concerned not only about communist activities, but also about nationalist criticism of Western influence in Iraq.⁵²

Internal Security and Repression

The prevailing Cold War international system was reflected not only in the regime’s policies towards leftist ideologies and propaganda as discussed above, but also in the emphasis on organizing the police and army to maintain internal security. In order to suppress the political opposition Nuri drew on the Iraqi Police Force which numbered

⁵⁰ Gallman to Department of State, April 26, 1955, Despatch no. 522, Top Secret, 787.5/4-2655. Subject: Threat of Communist Subversion in Iraq and Recommendations Re Possible Steps to Support Indigenous Counter-Measures.

⁵¹ Husain Jamil, Al-‘Iraq al-Jadid, [New Iraq] (Bairut: Dar Munaimana li al-Taba’a wa al-Nashr, first edition, book 1, 1958), p. 18; Sabah al-Durra, Al-Tatawwur al-Sina’i fi al-‘Iraq: Al-Qita’ al-Khas [Industrial Development in Iraq: The Private Sector] (Baghdad: Matba’at al-Nujum, 1968), p. 35, both works referred to in ‘Ali, Al-‘Iraq, p. 23.

⁵² Statistics clearly show that Iraq’s major trading partners were the U.S.A., Canada, the Sterling area, and the European Economic Community. In 1958 3.6% of Iraq’s exports went to the United States and Canada, 41.4% to the Sterling area, and 11.8% to the European Community. In the same year 15% of Iraq’s imports came from the United States and Canada, 35% from the Sterling area, and 24.1% from the European Community, ‘Ali, Al-‘Iraq, p. 26.

12,500-14,000 policemen, and the armed forces, approximately 54,000 strong. According to the American ambassador the two forces were “considered capable of maintaining internal security.”⁵³ With regard to the Mobile Police Force the Ambassador stated that the Force was the “only really effective uniformed element of the Police.”⁵⁴ It numbered 3,000-4,000 policemen. The Criminal Investigation Department, “doubtless one of the better run departments of the Iraqi Government,” was charged with monitoring and investigating communist activities.⁵⁵ The Investigation Department maintained records of 300,000 people, roughly five percent of the population. Of these, 10,000 were individuals with leftist leanings. The American ambassador noted that a marked change with respect to political offenders had taken place after Nuri’s return to office in the summer of 1954, with the courts accepting evidence “which would have been held to be quite inadmissible eight months ago...The courts are almost daily handing down convictions for communist or communist front activities and meting out sentences ranging from three months to

⁵³ Gallman to Department of State, April 26, 1955, Despatch no. 522, Top Secret, 787.5/4-2655. Subject: Threat of Communist Subversion in Iraq and Recommendations Re Possible Steps to Support Indigenous Counter-Measures.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid. Gallman’s reports to the State Department show how important to the United States combating communist influence in the Middle East was. His assessment of the results appears, however, to be over-inflated. The United States Information Service Program operating in Iraq was “designed to assist Iraqis to become aware of the threat of communism and to stimulate them into working to counter the menace,” Despatch no. 522, Top Secret, 787.5/4-2655. There were six Americans and 33 Iraqis working for the Program at the center in Baghdad, and there were branches in Kirkuk and Basra with a budget for FY 1955 of \$100,000 exclusive of American personnel. Though the Information Service was making efforts especially in Baghdad to counter communist influence, the Americans realized that the best results would be obtained through Iraqi efforts and therefore sought to increase the latter’s role in the Program. Gallman’s impression of this work was: “This is of considerable value, since it can be coupled with some evidence that the cold war has been won in Iraq and that Iraqi attitudes are generally what we would like to have them,” Despatch No. 522, Top Secret, 787.5/4-2655. This is a remarkably optimistic assessment of Iraqi public opinion and suggests that Gallman largely moved in pro-regime circles. Incidentally, during the intifadha in 1952 demonstrators had stated unequivocally what their opinion was of the Western powers when the former broke into the Information Service offices and burned the books and papers they found. The demonstrators also set fire to the offices of The Iraq Times and the British Overseas Airways Corporation, Gabbay, Communism, p. 58. The American ambassador should not be judged too hard, however, since the habit of viewing everything through a Cold War prism was the prevalent analytical method in Washington and London, with a few exceptions among diplomats and Western officials on the spot.

three years.”⁵⁶ In view of the lowered standard for what was acceptable “evidence” one can suspect that the large number of people being convicted for communist activities were not necessarily communists, but simply regime critics, whom Nuri could now prosecute thanks to the lowered standard for what was acceptable as evidence.

As to the loyalty of the armed forces, the assessment of the American ambassador was somewhat off the mark, whereas his conclusion regarding the capabilities of the army was more realistic. The Ambassador stated that the armed forces

“are believed to be loyal to the Crown. Nuri al-Said, too, enjoys considerable popularity in military circles. As far as can be ascertained, the military have not been excessively effected by communist infiltration, although there are a few instances of officers and enlisted men (largely technical personnel) having been court-martialed for leftist affiliations.”⁵⁷

In view of what happened three years later, this was not an accurate assessment. If Nuri did not know, however, one could not expect the American Embassy to know either, since its assessment was most likely based on intelligence provided by the Iraqi Government. With regard to the armed forces’ defensive capability the Embassy

⁵⁶ Gallman to the Department of State, April 26, 1955, Despatch no. 522, Top Secret, 787.5/4-2655, Subject: Threat of Communist Subversion in Iraq and Recommendations Re Possible Steps to Support Counter-Measures. Furthermore, since September 1954 the Government had been empowered “to denationalize any Iraqi convicted of communist or communist-front activities and to detain him until such time as deportation can be arranged.” The fact that Nuri had lowered the standard for admissible evidence did not fully guarantee the success of the Criminal Investigation Department’s investigations, however, to which testifies a remark in an Embassy report: “The danger undoubtedly exists that the uneducated masses of the Iraqi public will disbelieve any suggestion that an individual may be sought by the Police for communist subversion; instead, the tendency is ever present to impute dubious motives to the authorities and to seek to protect the individual from the latter. Government and its agents in Iraq, as elsewhere in the Middle East, are usually suspect in the public eye.” The realization that the population tended to assume that individuals wanted for political crimes deserved protection and not to be handed over to the police, must have been disturbing to the Iraqi authorities as well as to Western Cold War ideologues in Washington and London, since it constitutes hard evidence that the population in general was not profoundly affected by the regime’s anti-communist propaganda. Conversely, this circumstance should not be misconstrued as ardent popular support for communist ideology. Most likely the ordinary Iraqi could easily identify with individuals persecuted by a regime which was not perceived as a paragon of morality.

⁵⁷ Gallman to the Department of State, April 26, 1955, Despatch no. 522, Top Secret, 787.5/4-2655, Subject: Threat of Communist Subversion in Iraq and Recommendations Re Possible Steps to Support Counter-Measures. The obsession with combating communism eventually led to the closing of the Soviet Legation in November 1954, perceived by the Iraqi authorities as a center for leftist activity.

concluded that “[i]n either a localized or a general war, it is axiomatic that the Iraqi Armed Forces cannot defend the country without outside help.”⁵⁸ This most likely did not come as a surprise to the West, since the British probably believed that they would have to do most of the fighting to repulse a Soviet attack, with the Iraqi army playing a minor role in such a scenario. On the basis of this assumption the primary mission—in the eyes of the Western powers—of the Iraqi military could have been to defend the regime against internal and not external enemies.⁵⁹

The Development Board and the Economic and Social Situation

Both Nuri and his British and American allies considered the economy key to political and social stability in Iraq. An American Embassy report stated explicitly that there was a close relationship between standard of living and social stability:

The major threat to Iraq about which Iraq can do something on its own is the low standard of living, a factor contributing to internal instability. As long as living conditions continue so poor in the face of visible means to do something to improve them, Iraq will be vulnerable to communist exploitation. It would seem that in the long run the most practical defense of Iraq is to strengthen the economy and internal security...⁶⁰

The violent acts carried out by fallahin in 1946 and which continued to occur in the 1950s were a clear indication that the situation in the rural areas needed to be addressed. In an

⁵⁸ Gallman to the Department of State, April 26, 1955, Despatch no. 522, Top Secret, 787.5/4-2655, Subject: Threat of Communist Subversion in Iraq and Recommendations Re Possible Steps to Support Counter-Measures.

⁵⁹ The American Chargé d’Affaires W. Clyde Dunn reported in July 1956 that rightist political groups in Iraq appeared to be agreed that the army would play an important role in protecting the regime in the event of a leftist rebellion, W. Clyde Dunn, Chargé d’Affaires, July 26, 1956, Secret, Despatch no. 67, Enclosure, 787.5-MSP/7-2656.

⁶⁰ W. Clyde Dunn, Chargé d’Affaires, July 26, 1956, Secret, Despatch no. 67, Enclosure, 787.5-MSP/7-2656.

attempt to cope with the precarious situation, a law had been promulgated in 1951 which stipulated that state land be distributed to fallahin to be cultivated by them.⁶¹

In order to facilitate the implementation of the program, the government made loans available to the fallahin. As a result, the Agricultural Bank, established in 1940, expanded its operations by opening branches in Basra, Arbil, Al-Sulaimaniyya, and Al-Qadisiyya Provinces. The Bank granted medium-and long-term loans to the peasants. These loans were, however, spent on “non-productive consumption.” Instead of investing the money the fallahin received from the Bank, they used their loans to defray costs of living during the harvest period due to the unavailability of short-term loans for this purpose. Consequently, the peasant remained under the control of the large landowner and the usurer, and even more so than previously. The failure of the government program had thus aggravated the situation in the countryside which led to the establishment of the Development Board in 1950.⁶²

The establishment of the Development Board gave Nuri a degree of independence vis-à-vis his conservative political supporters who constituted an effective impediment to reform. In 1952 a law was promulgated which stipulated that 70 percent of the oil revenues be allocated to development.⁶³ By the mid-1950s it was clear, however, that the

⁶¹ Yahya Ghani Najjar, *Dirasa fi al-Takhtit al-Iqtisadi ma'a Ishara Khasa li Tajribat al-'Iraq* [A Study in Economic Planning with Special Reference to Iraq's Experience] (Baghdad: Manshurat Wizarat al-Thaqafa wa al-Funun, 1978), p. 91.

⁶² Ibid., p. 92.

⁶³ Kazim 'Ali, *Al-'Iraq fi 'Ahd 'Abd al-Karim Qasim*, p. 20. The 1952 law appeared well on paper and both Nuri and the Western powers were hopeful that Iraq's oil wealth would enable his regime to survive. It turned out, however, that the Development Board's focus on a small number of large-scale projects at the expense of a greater number of small-scale projects did not win the political opposition and the critical public over. Al-Jamali states that the prime minister, the finance minister, and a vice president also were permanent members of the Board, which also had five other members appointed for a term of five years, Muhammad Fadhil al-Jamali, *Al-'Iraq al-Hadith: Ara' wa Mutala'at fi Shu'unihi al-Siyasiyya* [Modern Iraq: Views on and Studies in Her Political Affairs; the title page states that the book's title is “...Al-Siyasiyya,” whereas the title is ‘...al-Masiriyya’” according to the cover] (n.d., n.p.), p. 67.

investment of oil revenues caused controversy. The large projects took four to five years to complete and would only then begin to benefit the Iraqis. The poorer strata of the population, however, were impatient to see immediate improvement of their situation in the villages, small towns, and slums. The result was growing signs of discontent.⁶⁴ The Development Board survived into the revolutionary period but

Prior to the 1958 revolution development programmes were conceived as lists of economic projects, unrelated to overall economic planning, with special emphasis on investment in social overheads as against directly productive projects.⁶⁵

The above quotation indicates that the Development Board's projects suffered from two major flaws—lack of coordination between the projects, and an emphasis on large-scale projects which would not have a rapid impact on the Iraqi economy and the standard of living of the population.

Lord Salter's report of 1955 on the Development Board's economic program largely confirms the flaws in the program referred to in the above paragraph.⁶⁶ The report, completed in the spring of 1955, offered, among other things, the following criticism: First, there had been too great a focus on dams and water projects. Second, no coordinated planning had taken place regarding the use of the water in the reservoirs to be built. Third, insufficient effort and money had been allocated to development to insure quick and palpable results. The Board had failed to prioritize housing. More attention to this area would have produced quick and visible results to ordinary Iraqis. The Board had done very little to improve Iraq's agricultural sector. Fourth, the Board had ignored the

⁶⁴ Ionides, Divide And Lose, p. 120. Ionides was appointed a full-time Board member (the Board had one British and one American member in addition to the Iraqi members) in the spring of 1955. His account of the last years of the Iraqi monarchy is pro-Arab, anti-Zionist, and highly critical of Britain's role in Iraq and the Middle East

⁶⁵ Rony, Communism and Agrarian Reform, p. 39.

⁶⁶ In the spring of 1954 Lord Salter was appointed by the Iraqi Government to produce a report on the Development Board's economic program and present it to the Board within a year.

human capital. Efforts should be made to get endemic diseases under control. Public services, such as domestic water supply, needed improvement. Fifth, Salter also added a political dimension to his report by drawing attention to the danger of not allowing popular discontent to be expressed in Parliament.⁶⁷

The former Iraqi Prime Minister Muhammad Fadhil al-Jamali has pointed to a number of reasons outside the Development Board for why the development program was not more successful. He largely defends the intentions of the program but concedes that there were problems. First, there was not much communication between the government and the public with respect to the development program. The reason for this was the government's insufficient possession of means of propaganda in order to enlighten the public about the Development Board's activities. As a result, all the public heard about the development projects was criticism. Second, Iraq lacked political stability, with the average term in office of a government being less than six months. This fact delayed the completion of the projects and adversely affected their organization. Third, technical competence in official circles was not high, and expertise was not encouraged.⁶⁸ According to al-Jamali it would have been extremely difficult to improve the record of Iraq's development program, since it would have required a radical change of the political system in the country in order to create political stability, the prospects for which appeared to be bleak in the middle of the 1950s due to the extreme polarization of Iraqi society.

⁶⁷ Salter, J. A., The Development of Iraq: A Plan of Action (Caxton Press, 1955), no page reference, referred to in Ionides, Divide and Lose, p. 121.

⁶⁸ Al-Jamali, Al-'Iraq al-Hadith, p. 70. Ionides emphasizes that technical expertise alone was not sufficient to resolve all problems. There were two reasons for this. First, the large development projects "created the need for legislative and administrative reforms which no one had enough to see to..." Second, few of the experts "had the experience...necessary to organize a multiplicity of small works to make the fullest use of local labor and materials..." Ionides, Divide and Lose, pp. 212-213.

Later and more ideological Iraqi analyses of the failed policies of the pre-revolutionary Iraqi regime in part corroborate Salter's criticism. There were several reasons for the backwardness of the Iraqi agriculture, the most important of which was the inefficient use of available water. This in turn created large tracts of land, which were not suitable for cultivation. Primitive tilling methods were a further impediment to agricultural growth.⁶⁹ Also, the low level of agricultural output resulted in Iraq having to import wheat and barley. A final important reason was that profits from agricultural production remained concentrated in the hands of large landowners, which made it difficult for the fallahin to make ends meet.⁷⁰ The fact that 0.012 percent of landowners controlled 9.5 percent of all agricultural land goes to show how influential they were.⁷¹

Several Iraqi scholars have been critical of the Development Board's failure to develop the Iraqi industry. The contributions of the Industrial Bank for this purpose

⁶⁹ Kazim Habib and Makram al-Talabani, Ara' fi Mafhum wa Qadhaya al-Islah al-Zira'i [Views on the Concept and Issues of Agricultural Reform] (Baghdad: Manshurat Maktabat Baghdad, Matba'a Salman al-A'zami, 1971), p. 31, referred to in 'Ali, Al-'Iraq, p. 17.

⁷⁰ Hisham Mutawalli, Iqtisadiyat al-'Iraq [The Economy of Iraq] (Dimashq: Markaz al-Dirasat al-Iqtisadiyya), p. 38, referred to in 'Ali, Al-'Iraq, p. 19; Tal'at al-Shaibani, Waqi' al-Milkiya al-Zira'iyya fi al-'Iraq [Developments in Agricultural Ownership in Iraq] (Baghdad: Dar al-Ahali, 1959), p. 64.

⁷¹ Habib and al-Talabani, Ara' fi Mafhum wa Qadhaya al-Islah al-Zira'i, p. 22, referred to in 'Ali, Al-'Iraq, pp. 17-18. Muhammad Salman Hasan adopts a nationalist approach to explaining the failures of the Development Board. He refers to three factors: first, the administrative and financial organization of the Board by external forces; second, the fact that foreign experts held leading positions; and, third, the lack of scientific data to support the national economy, Muhammad Salman Hasan, "Nahwa Jihaz Iqtisadi Thawri" [Towards a Revolutionary Economic System], Al-Thaqafa al-Jadida, No. 9 (May 1959), p. 11, referred to in 'Ali, Al-'Iraq, pp. 20-21. Another nationalist critic of the Development Board's policies, Husain Jamil, emphasizes that the Board did not utilize the oil revenues to develop the industrial sector "since the lion's share of these revenues went to the foreign monopolistic companies with Iraq receiving only a very tiny share estimated at four shilling per ton [of oil]," Husain Jamil, Al-'Iraq al-Jadid, [New Iraq] (Bairut: Dar Munaimana li al-Taba'a wa al-Nashr, book 1, 1958), p. 18; al-Durra, Al-Tatawwur al-Sina'i fi al-'Iraq, p. 35, referred to in 'Ali, Al-'Iraq, p. 23. The picture that Jamil paints of the majority of the oil revenues going to foreign oil companies appears to be corroborated to a certain extent by Jawad Hashim who provides statistics according to which Iraq's oil revenues increased from ID6.09 million in 1950 to ID90 million in 1958, while, during the same period, ID 15.36 million was paid to foreign oil companies as interest on duties in 1950, and ID78.45 million in 1958, Jawad Hashim, et al., Lamahat fi Tatawwur al-Iqtisad al-'Iraqi: Qita' al-Tijarat al-Kharijiyya [Investigation of the Development of the Iraqi Economy: The Foreign Trade Sector] (Bairut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya li al-Dirasa wa al-Nashr, June 1977), p. 7, referred to in 'Ali, Al-'Iraq, p. 25.

merely amounted to ID1,979,898 in the three-year period of 1949-1951.⁷² Of these allocations 70 percent went to construction, 25 percent to irrigation, and 5 percent to industry.⁷³ Later in the 1950s, however, the regime increased the emphasis on industrial development, though the primary focus was on increasing agricultural output. The growing importance of the industrial sector in the government's development planning was reflected when the Development Board Program was increased in May 1956 to a six-year ID500 million plan, 1955-1960, retroactive to April 1, 1955.⁷⁴ Most of the great projects of this expanded second five-year plan, however, remained in the planning stage until the end of the monarchic era and were never completed.⁷⁵

Nuri's and other prime ministers' policies were insufficient or did little radically to improve the social conditions in Iraq. At times, however, not the Government but the Parliament was the problem. Its mostly conservative deputies opposed policies which would have improved the lives of the poorest citizens. The housing program was according to one observer

making good progress, except in Baghdad itself, where there was a desperate need for rehousing the tens of thousands of immigrants who had come in from the countryside...They were living in mud hovels of the kind they build for themselves in the countryside, but these, clustered in great agglomerations, without proper water supply and no sanitation, were an obvious social menace and political danger.⁷⁶

The Development Board had plans for providing poor Iraqis with land, some building material, and technical guidance to build their own houses. The program floundered in

⁷² Kazim Habib, Dirasa fi Ittijahat wa Mashakil al-Tatawwur al-Sina'i fi al-'Iraq, [Studies in Directions and Problems of Industrial Development in Iraq], p. 580.

⁷³ Al-Durra, Al-Tatawwur al-Sina'i, p. 55, referred to in 'Ali, Al-'Iraq, p. 24.

⁷⁴ W. Clyde Dunn, Chargé d'Affaires, July 26, 1956, Secret, Despatch No. 67, Enclosure, 787.5-MSP/7-2656.

⁷⁵ Sa'id 'Abbud al-Samarra'i, Muqaddima fi al-Tarikh al-Iqtisadi al-'Iraqi, [Introduction to Iraqi Economic History] (al-Qadha'-al-Najaf, 1973), p. 177, referred to in 'Ali, p. 20.

⁷⁶ Ionides, Divide and Lose, p. 203.

Baghdad, however, due to the fact that most land surrounding the capital was in private hands and the landowners resisted government take-over of their land at less than exorbitant prices.⁷⁷

The educational system was in dire need of drastic improvement, particularly in the countryside, to which testifies the following statistics on literacy. According to the 1947 census the literacy rate among males of five years of age and over was 40 percent in Baghdad but only two percent in certain remote villages. The literacy rate among women was even lower, with 20 percent in the large cities and just over one percent in rural areas.⁷⁸ The 1957 census reported the national literacy rate at 18 percent (40 percent in the cities and 7 percent in rural areas). The percentage of literate women had remained more or less the same throughout the decade. If illiteracy was a problem in Iraq, education did not necessarily resolve it. The reason is that despite the widespread illiteracy in Iraq many intellectuals were under- or unemployed and constituted a section of society highly critical of the government. This was particularly the case among

⁷⁷ Ionides, Divide and Lose, p. 204. An Embassy report dated April 1955 stated that the Development Board was planning to allocate "ID6,000,000 for the construction of low cost homes for civil servants and ID5,000,000 for military construction is already being contemplated by the Development Board," Gallman to Department of State, April 26, 1955, Despatch 522, Top Secret, 787.5/4-2655, Subject: Threat of Communist Subversion in Iraq and Recommendations Re Possible Steps to Support Counter-Measures. Gallman believed the project would boost the morale among civil servants and military personnel and the United States "should [therefore] encourage its speedy implementation and perhaps subsequent expansion," Despatch 522, Top Secret, 787.5/4-2655. It appears not to have occurred to either Gallman or the Development Board that the impact of such a project would have been much greater among poor Iraqis, who constituted the overwhelming majority of the population, than among a considerably smaller number of civil servants and military personnel. The rationale for the plans was most likely that the military was an instrument that could be used to control the discontented majority of the population, and that providing low cost housing would consolidate the military's loyalty to the regime. At the same time such a rationale reflected a certain degree of doubt regarding the military's loyalty on the part of the regime, why otherwise go to great lengths to keep the military content?

⁷⁸ Gabbay, Communism and Agrarian Reform, p. 21. The fact that children were included suggests that the criteria for literacy must have been at an elementary level. The low literacy rates, however, did not mean that Iraqis were ignorant of what was transpiring in their own country and in the Middle East. Gabbay emphasizes that the male population was kept informed by literate people who would read aloud from newspapers at cafés.

lawyers.⁷⁹ The government was thus facing a dilemma: If it reduced illiteracy by making education accessible to everyone, it simultaneously alienated a large number of graduates who could not find employment and quite understandably voiced harsh criticism of the regime.

The intellectuals had reason to be discontented with the regime, but their problems paled in comparison with those of the fallahin in the rural areas and the workers in the cities. An analyst has described the conditions the peasants lived under as follows: “The village presented a characteristic picture: there was a stately dwelling—the property of the local head—and round about it a conglomeration of miserable dilapidated clay hovels whose primitiveness almost beggared description.”⁸⁰ Few fallahin owned a pair of shoes, and their small, windowless huts were sparsely furnished.⁸¹ Prior to the revolution peasants constituted 75 percent of the population, agriculture’s contribution to the gross domestic product was 25 percent, and the fallahin’s share of the national income before July 14 was less than 13 percent. The fallah’s annual income did not exceed ID20 (\$56), which was not sufficient an income to support a family.⁸² The situation of the workers in the cities’ sarifas, slums, was similar to that of the fallahin. The former’s numbers were significantly smaller—354,000 in 1957—but they still exercised more influence on

⁷⁹ Gallman to Department of State, April 26, 1955, Despatch no. 522, Top Secret, 787.5/4-2655 Subject: Threat of Communist Subversion in Iraq and Recommendations Re Possible Steps to Support Indigenous Counter-Measures.

⁸⁰ Gabbay, Communism, p. 25.

⁸¹ Quint, M.N., “The Idea of Progress in an Iraqi Village,” Middle East Journal (Fall 1958), pp. 369-84; “The Arab Village of the Middle East,” Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution, 1943, pp. 523-43, quoted in Gabbay, Communism, p. 28.

⁸² ‘Ali al-Wardi, Dirasa fi Tabi‘at al-Mujtama‘ al-‘Iraqi [Study of the Nature of Iraqi Society]0 (Baghdad: Matba‘at al-‘Ani, 1965), pp. 362-363; Al-Thawra al-‘Arabiyya (Ba‘thist newspaper), no. 1, 1972; both sources referred to in ‘Ali, Al-‘Iraq, p. 32. In the Middle East as a whole approximately 75 percent of the population lived on agriculture, Anwar Ali, “The Present Situation in the Middle East As Seen By Middle Easterners,” in The Evolution of Public Responsibility in the Middle East, edited by Harvey P. Hall (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1955), p. 14.

national life than the fallahin due to their presence in the cities. Like the peasants, the workers could not make ends meet with their earnings per day ranging from ¢84 to \$1.68. Workers could have played a more prominent role in the cities, however, had it not been for the backwardness of the Iraqi industrial sector.⁸³

Having alienated fallahin, workers, and intellectuals as discussed above, the regime also deprived the Iraqi people of participation in the government of their country. The American ambassador in Baghdad stated the following in a report on the lack of popular participation in Iraqi political life:

Power...has invariably resided in the hands of a relatively small body of men, probably not numbering more than 2,000 persons...about .4% of the total population, drawn primarily from the well-to-do and land owning classes. Notwithstanding the façade of occasional parliamentary elections, public participation in government is not encouraged....[G]overnment in Iraq has tended to work almost exclusively in the interests of this controlling group, which...has tended to obstruct wherever possible even evolutionary emergence of sorely needed social and economic reform....[T]here is to this day a sizeable and...unbridged gap between government, identified as it is with the land owning group, and the vast majority of the rural and urban population of the country.⁸⁴

This analysis correctly identified the lack of real popular participation and the “archaic economic system” as serious obstacles to reform, concluding that these impediments perpetuated concentration of political and economic power in the hands of a small number of individuals.

⁸³ Muhammad Salman Hasan, *Al-Tatawwur al-Iqtisadi fi al-'Iraq: Al-Tijara al-Kharijiyya wa al-Tatawwur al-Iqtisadi* [Economic Development in Iraq: Foreign Trade and Economic Development] (Sida, Bairut: Al-Maktaba al-'Asriyya li al-Taba'a wa al-Nashr, 1965, second edition), p. 460; Al-Wardi, *Dirasa fi Tabi'at*, p. 264; both sources referred to in 'Ali, *Al-'Iraq*, p. 36. The average per capita income in Iraq in 1955 was \$172, while it reached \$1250 in the developed countries in the same year, Najjar, *Dirasa fi al-Takhtit al-Iqtisadi*, p. 89. By comparison, the average per capita income for the Middle East in the early 1950s was estimated at \$80 per annum. In Egypt the average per capita income in 1953 was \$112, Anwar Ali, Director. Middle East Department, International Monetary Fund, “The Present Situation in the Middle East As Seen By Middle Easterners,” in *The Evolution of Public Responsibility in the Middle East*, edited by Harvey P. Hall (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1955), pp. 11,16.

⁸⁴ Gallman to the Department of State, April 26, 1955, Despatch no. 522, Top Secret, 787.5/4-2655 Subject: Threat of Communist Subversion in Iraq and Recommendations Re Possible Steps to Support Indigenous Counter-Measures.

Despite the accurate analysis above, the Americans like the British regarded economic and not political reforms as the only way to save Nuri and Iraq from a popular revolution, concurring with the prime minister in this assessment.⁸⁵ American diplomats were convinced that the solution to the economic and social problems of Iraq was increased American influence:

We believe the time may be ripe, therefore, to consider marshalling American influence—in both the Development Board and in the various Ministries where U.S.O.M. [United States Operations Mission] advisors may be in a position to offer counsel—to work for a broadening of emphasis to include both short term impact projects and a greater allocation of development funds to high priority training needs.⁸⁶

Priority areas according to American analysts were road building, a housing program, a teachers training program, and an effort to expedite the Development Board's public health program. The Board was considering allocating "ID6,000,000 for the construction of low cost homes for civil servants and ID5,000,000 for military construction (barracks, housing, etc.)."⁸⁷ In the American Embassy's view the educational curriculum was also in need of revision. It recommended that "a greater emphasis...be laid on the development of civic responsibility—sadly lacking throughout Iraq—and on the ability to think

⁸⁵ Ibid. In the same report Gallman also stated that "...the vast majority of Iraq's estimated 5,068,000 population—perhaps 90%—consists of low income small farmers and agricultural workers and low income urban wage earners. The standard of living of this group...hovers near the subsistence level. Poverty is the rule rather than the exception. The annual per capita income today is possibly \$100, which is disturbingly low." Many a fallah would have been happy to earn as much as the "disturbingly low" income that Gallman refers to, since the income of most fallahin amounted to half or less than half of the annual national per capita income.

⁸⁶ Gallman to the Department of State, April 26, 1955, Despatch no. 522, Top Secret, 787.5/4-2655 Subject: Threat of Communist Subversion in Iraq and Recommendations Re Possible Steps to Support Indigenous Counter-Measures.

⁸⁷ Ibid. It is difficult to see the logic in limiting the housing project to a small group of the population—civil servants and the military—if, as stated in footnote 75, the standard of living of 90 percent of the population is near subsistence level. Obviously, neither the Development Board nor the American Embassy considered the possibility that housing projects for the poor vast majority of the population would boost the government's popularity.

logically.”⁸⁸ The Embassy further advocated the introduction of athletics into the curriculum of academic institutions, since this would presumably keep the students busy and prevent them from demonstrating in the streets against the regime.

An American report published in 1956 on how to raise living standards in Iraq, confirmed some of the criticism directed against the large-scale projects of the Development Board, discussed above.⁸⁹ The report, prepared by the American company Arthur D. Little, Inc., was jointly sponsored by the Development Board of Iraq and the United States Operations Mission to Iraq. Focusing on feasible industrial development in Iraq, the report addressed some of the criticism offered by Iraqi scholars referred to above. The report stated that “[i]t will enable the [Development] Board to embark on a program of industrial expansion that will lead to higher living standards for the people of Iraq. It offers a plan for balanced industrial development...”⁹⁰ Having established, “by direct observation of living standards in rural Iraq,” that a very low level of per capita income prevailed among the rural population, the report also emphasized, however, that industrial activity based on certain of Iraq’s resources would produce new wealth and “a rapid and substantial improvement” in living standards, by increasing the small numbers of the industrial work force, which constituted only 5 percent of Iraq’s working population. The report cautioned, however, that the economic structure of the country

⁸⁸ Ibid. If Western diplomats and politicians were such paragons of logical thinking, their policies in the Middle East in the 1940s and 1950s would probably have been more successful. Furthermore, Gallman does not consider the possibility that it was the ability to reason that led Iraqi students to take to the streets in protest against the government’s policies. Finally, Gallman fails to realize that many students, including those who engage in athletics, read newspapers, and, in the case of Iraqi students, tuned in to the Egyptian radio station Sawt al-‘Arab as well.

⁸⁹ The report also confirms al-Jamali’s criticism referred to above regarding insufficient expertise in government circles.

⁹⁰ Arthur D. Little, Inc., A Plan For Industrial Development in Iraq (Cambridge, Massachusetts: May 31, 1956), p. 3.

was “inappropriate for the development of a substantial large-scale industry.”⁹¹ It is obvious that the Little Report confirms the conclusions drawn by many critics of the development program, namely that the development program should have focused on small-scale industrial projects to achieve a rapid increase in living standards.

This chapter has established that the Cold War policies of the Western powers and Nuri were reflected in the repression of leftist political activities in Iraq. Like Nuri's foreign policy contributed to increased tension in the Middle East, his domestic policy focusing on suppressing political opposition greatly polarized Iraqi society. His preoccupation with the alleged communist threat fuelled nationalist and leftist opposition to his regime. One reason for Nuri's swift suppression of any manifestation of political opposition was the sharp criticism of Iraq's membership of the Baghdad Pact, a cornerstone in Nuri's pro-West policies. The Iraqi prime minister must thus assume much of the responsibility for the highly polarized political discourse in Iraq, a result of his heavy-handed treatment of political opposition, but less responsibility for failed economic and social reforms, some of which were stubbornly opposed by his conservative supporters in

⁹¹ Arthur D. Little, Inc., A Plan For Industrial Development in Iraq, p. 4. The report further stated that one of the main reasons for poverty and underdevelopment in Iraq was insufficient saving, which prevented capital accumulation and investment. Thanks to Iraq's considerable oil revenues, however, this was not deemed to be a serious problem, although the report warned that “it must not lead to an attitude that is careless of the future and unattentive to economic efficiency in industrial and other development projects,” *ibid.*, p. 5. Finally, the Little Report recommended the establishment of, *inter alia*, building-materials industries, date-product industries, paper manufacture, and a steel-rolling mill. In the company's view, projects for utilization of natural gas, fertilizer production, and manufacture of plastic materials needed further study, *ibid.*, pp. 382-387. As to the insufficient level of saving in Iraq, Ionides explains it as a consequence of the fact that possibly “four-fifths or more of the population are usually outside the boundaries of the full money mechanism, living in a subsistence economy, eating what they grow and converting only a small margin into cash for consumer goods and simple tools,” Ionides, Divide And Lose, p. 211. Ionides argued that money simply did not serve as the medium for accumulation of wealth in rural areas. He differed, however, with the Little Report as to the usefulness of a steel mill project. Whereas this was one of the Report's recommendations, Ionides contended that the Iraqis would benefit more from the establishing of brickworks, since a steel mill would necessarily be built in an industrial center, whereas a brickworks could be built anywhere in the country and therefore distribute industrial development and wealth more equitably to different parts of the country, Ionides, Divide And Lose, p. 212.

Parliament. Their refusal to pass legislation which would have alleviated the lot of a majority of Iraqis contributed greatly to perpetuating the latter's low standard of living.

Finally, the well-intended but often not very well thought out projects of the Development Board contributed to the social discontent in Iraq. One important reason for this situation was that most large-scale projects of the Board were also long-term projects. They would take several years to complete and would therefore not have an immediate impact on the life of the poorer strata of the population. A second reason was that the Board's planners failed to address the appalling conditions in the slums of the major cities, where housing and health care projects could have enhanced the support for the regime.

REGIONAL SECURITY AND THE BAGHDAD PACT

Insecurity in the Middle East

A number of important regional developments in the late 1940s and early 1950s had a profound impact on the world-wide strategic, political, and economic situation in the mid-1950s. This chapter will analyze the reasons for these developments, the impact they had, and whether they constituted manifestations of historical continuity or fundamental change and a break with previous historical processes in the Middle East. In this context it is important to address the question to what extent alternative policy options could have resulted in a radically different history of the Middle East and Iraq in the 1950s. What considerations motivated Nuri al-Sa'id to pursue certain policies, even in the face of strong domestic and regional opposition?

Britain's imperialist policies in the 1940s had left a legacy which shaped the perception of the Western presence in the Middle East in the following decade. In 1941 Britain had deposed Iran's Reza Shah due to his pro-German policies and established a joint British-Soviet condominium over the country. Furthermore, in the same year Britain had toppled the government of Iraqi Prime Minister Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani for the same reason as Reza Shah had been removed, following a one-month war against the Iraqi Army. Also, in 1942 British tanks had surrounded King Faruq's Palace compelling him to appoint a Prime Minister to London's liking or else face abdication. This British action

had profoundly influenced the Free Officers who overthrew the Egyptian monarchy in 1952.⁹²

The creation of the State of Israel in 1948, considered a great disaster by Arabs, had both negative and positive consequences for Arab leaders. Some scholars have argued that the problem of Israel, being of such a magnitude to the Arabs, should have united them, whereas the opposite actually happened: the existence of Israel did not contribute to Arab unity.⁹³ In times of war, however, Arab unity was stronger, though this had not produced coordinated military operations. When Arabs had engaged in military operations against Israel, even moderate politicians such as the Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Sa'id had stated in public that he favored the elimination of Israel. In private, however, he had voiced flexibility.⁹⁴ Conversely, the Arab-Israeli conflict was exploited by Arab leaders for domestic consumption, since it served as a means for these leaders to remain in power by diverting the public's attention from social, political, and economic problems in Arab societies. The negative consequence of the conflict was that kings, presidents,

⁹² On February 4, 1942 Ambassador Miles Lampson Killearn had demanded that Faruq appoint Mustafa al-Nahas Pasha prime minister. The king had refused and British tanks had been called upon to make him more cooperative, Haykal, *Nasser*, pp. 28-29. Haykal describes how this humiliating event affected the Egyptian psyche, laying the foundation for the Free Officers revolution on July 23, 1952. When the Free Officers overthrew King Faruq the commander in chief of the British forces in Egypt, General Sir George Erskine favored intervention to restore the monarchy most likely oblivious of the changes taking place in the Middle East and of Britain's reduced status as a world power following World War II. The British Ambassador Sir Ralph Stevenson, however, opposed intervention, Haykal, *Nasser*, p. 45. The Iraqi Free Officers who carried out the Iraqi revolution in July 1958, were probably aware of the experience of their Egyptian colleagues, which would explain why one of their main concerns was the possibility of British intervention.

⁹³ Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East: Regional and International Politics, 1955-1967* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), p. xi. Gerges argues that Israel caused deep division among the Arab states. The reason is that Arab leaders used Israel to criticize one another for not doing enough for the Palestinians and the Arab cause. The issue of Israel "pitted conservatives against revolutionaries and revolutionaries against revolutionaries," Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East*, p. 4. Malcolm Kerr had argued the same point over twenty years earlier, Kerr, *The Arab Cold War*, pp. 145-146.

⁹⁴ Wright to D.S. Laskey, Foreign Office, Confidential, June 12, 1957, FO371/128056.

and politicians accused one another of insufficient contributions to vanquish the enemy.⁹⁵

With regard to the political exploitation of the Arab-Israeli issue, Iraq was somewhat exceptional. Nuri attempted to manipulate the conflict to his own advantage, without much success, however, due to his critics' focus on his pro-British foreign policy and the constraints he imposed on civil liberties.⁹⁶

The intensification of the Cold War in the late 1940s and early 1950s prompted the United States and Britain to propose to the Arab states the establishment of a collective security system. The first proposal, called the Middle East Command, was conveyed to potential allies in the Middle East on October 13, 1951.⁹⁷ Egypt's rejection of the Middle East Command prompted the West to put forward a new plan, the Middle East Defense Organization, in June 1952 which still accorded a leading role to Egypt and not to Iraq.⁹⁸ This plan met the same fate as the first one when Egypt rejected it in May 1953.⁹⁹ The dates of the two proposals are of particular significance since they testify to the fact that there was continuity in Egypt's position on Western security initiatives, and that this continuity was not dependent on the system of government in Egypt. The attitude of Egypt's revolutionary government to West's attempts to establish a regional collective

⁹⁵ Malcolm H. Kerr, "Regional Arab Politics and the Conflict with Israel," in Hammond, Paul and S. Alexander, eds., Political Dynamics in the Middle East (New York: American Elsevier, 1972), p. 63.

⁹⁶ The Iraq Times, November 14, 1956, p. 1. During the Suez Crisis Nuri had advocated the elimination of Israel, a statement obviously meant for domestic consumption.

⁹⁷ Secret negotiations with Israeli leaders to include Israel in a Middle East security organization had commenced as early as in 1951, Arnold Krammer, The Forgotten Friendship: Israel and the Soviet Bloc 1947-53 (Urbana, 1974), p. 183, referred to in Andreas Heinemann-Grüder, Sowjetische Politik im arabisch-israelischen Konflikt (Hamburg: Deutsches Orient-Institut, 1991), pp. 67-68. The Middle East Command proposal was conveyed by the U.S., Britain, France, and Turkey to the governments of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi-Arabia, Yemen, Israel, and Transjordan. The United States, Britain, France, Turkey, and Egypt were to be the founding members of the defense command, a fact which was unacceptable to Iraqi leaders, since it meant that their country would not play a leading role in the Command.

⁹⁸ Egypt rejected the Middle East Command proposal in October of 1951, Heinemann-Grüder, Sowjetische Politik, p. 72.

⁹⁹ Eppel, Iraq From Monarchy to Tyranny, p. 130.

security system with Western participation was thus consistent with that of King Faruq's pro-West regime. The implication of this was that a Western-led security pact in the Middle East would quite possibly be opposed by many Arabs.¹⁰⁰ The aforementioned is also an indication that the Arab states would not invite the Soviet Union—like the U.S. and Britain an extra-regional power, and, furthermore, not a power with which Egypt was on friendly terms prior to the Free Officers coup—to play a prominent role in the Middle East and that it would perhaps have been in the best interests of the West to support a regional defense organization without Western participation.¹⁰¹

The reason for Egypt's refusal to embrace the Western security plans was that Cairo aimed at establishing a security pact for Arab states only, based on the Arab League. This would enable the Arab states to form a bloc with a presumably unified policy towards the Western powers, Israel, and the Soviet Union. The intention was to secure a leading

¹⁰⁰ This possibility should have alerted the United States and Britain to the likelihood of serious tension within the Arab world if they went ahead with the formation of the Baghdad Pact, based on the Northern Tier and including Iraq.

¹⁰¹ The problem was that London and Washington wanted to exercise a certain degree of control over regional pacts, and the rationale for this wish was at least threefold. First, they feared that the Arabs would not be able to organize a credible Middle Eastern defense against a Soviet attack without Western military advisors. This fear was of course not dispelled even with Western participation in the Baghdad Pact. Second, an Arab defense organization would pose a serious threat to Israel, even if it would not be able to stop the Red Army, the reason being that the Arab states could pool their resources to focus on finding a military solution to the Palestinian issue—Egypt its population, and the oil rich states their wealth. Also, an exclusively Arab defense organization would of course not consult with the West prior to an attack on Israel. Third, there was most likely a fear in the United States and Britain that the Arabs might “fraternize” with the “enemy,” that is the Soviet Union, if the Americans and the British were not present to check such tendencies. It is worth mention, however, that the Egyptian President Gamal ‘Abdul Nasser had contacted the Russians only after several unsuccessful attempts to purchase arms from the West, Gerges, The Superpowers and the Middle East, pp. 29 and 48; Nigel J. Ashton, Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser: Anglo-American Relations and Arab Nationalism, 1955-59 (Houndmills and London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996), p. 53. The West was confronted with a dilemma, to which there was seemingly no solution. If the British and Americans did not get involved in Middle Eastern defense plans, they would exercise no control over Arab security policies, and if they got involved they would alienate a large portion of Arab nationalists. The policy they settled for was the latter, since it was based on thinking familiar to Western policymakers and would therefore presumably reduce the number of unknown forces they would have to deal with. As it turned out, the British and Americans had by far overestimated their ability to control Nasser, who would, however, have procured arms with or without Western involvement in regional defense organizations due to Western support of Israel.

position for Egypt in the Arab League and to enable Cairo to negotiate with Britain over the future of the Suez Canal base from a position of strength.¹⁰² Egypt had as early as the fall of 1949 presented a plan for the formation of an Arab League Collective Security Pact. One reason for the Pact was Egypt's rivalry with Iraq for the leadership of the Arab world, focused at the time on Syria. As a result of this power struggle Nuri proposed as an alternative, a treaty between the Arab states and the Western powers. At the same time the Iraqi Prime Minister put forward a plan for a reorganization of the Arab League, the purpose of which was to reduce the powers of the League's Egyptian Secretary. Nuri eventually relented and signed the Collective Security Pact in 1951, since a failure to accept the Pact would have meant political isolation for Iraq.¹⁰³

As a result of their preoccupation with security the two Western powers rated as lesser priorities nationalism, Israel, and economic considerations, thereby alienating the Egyptian revolutionary leaders. An important objective of the Western powers' plan for a Middle East Defense Organization was to include all states in the region.¹⁰⁴ The idea of an all-encompassing pact with Israel as a member suggests that the Western scheme was not well thought out since it obviously disregarded the tension between Israel and the Arab states, and regarded Arab-Israeli peace as plausible. With hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees dispersed over the Arab world it would have been very difficult for any Arab leader, especially for Nasser who was perceived by many Arabs as the foremost champion of the Arab cause, to sign a peace treaty with Israel unless the refugees were allowed to return. Israel's refusal to contemplate such a resolution to the Israeli-

¹⁰² Eppel, Iraq, p. 129.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Enver M. Koury, The Superpowers & the Balance of Power in the Arab World (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1970), p. 45

Palestinian question meant that any Arab proposal short of return for the Palestinian refugees would have been tantamount to political suicide for a moderate Arab leader such as Nuri, had he presented such a proposal. In the view of the Western powers, one way to achieve peace, or at least create a less volatile situation in the Middle East was the Tripartite Declaration of 1950, which stipulated control of Western arms transfers to Israel and the Arab states.¹⁰⁵ As with the other Western plans, the Declaration was unsuccessful.

When Dwight D. Eisenhower succeeded Harry Truman as President in 1953, the new Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, visited the Middle East in order to acquaint himself with the issues of the region. The conclusions Dulles drew during his visit are somewhat surprising, particularly in the context of later U.S. policies in this part of the world. Generally speaking, Dulles's perception of potential threats accorded the role of most likely aggressor to the Soviet Union, which was the rationale for the proposed

¹⁰⁵ The Anglo-French-American Tripartite Declaration of May 25, 1950 was the result of the creation of Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1948-1949. The objective of the Declaration was to prevent an arms race in the Middle East and to regulate arms transfers to the region. It also implied a guarantee of Israel's borders. At the time the three powers were the only suppliers of arms to the Middle East. When this monopoly was broken in 1955 by the Egyptian-Czechoslovak arms deal the Declaration was rendered obsolete, Magnus Persson, Great Britain, the United States, and the Security of the Middle East: The Formation of the Baghdad Pact (Lund, Sweden: Lund University Press), pp. 77-78; Patrick Seale, The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics 1945-1958 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986, first published in Great Britain 1965 by Oxford University Press), pp. 234-235. The Tripartite Declaration was subjected to intense criticism at the time in the Syrian press, George Tomeh, "Syria and Neutralism," in Sayegh, ed., The Dynamics of Neutralism in the Arab World, p. 126. As to the Egyptian-Czechoslovak arms deal in 1955, it was a popular decision with Egyptians and other Arabs, perceived as a successful attempt by an Arab state to exercise complete independence. Conversely, the Western powers viewed the deal as an opportunity for the Soviet Union to infiltrate the Middle East, Fayez Sayegh, "Neutralism in the United Arab Republic," in Sayegh, ed., The Dynamics of Neutralism in the Arab World, pp. 197-198. France later in the 1950s violated the Declaration with U.S. tacit consent, providing Israel with fighter jets. Koury, however, attributes more nefarious Western motives to the Declaration than merely a wish to freeze the Arab-Israeli conflict by barring the parties from acquiring Western arms. He argues that the true rationale for the proposed Western pacts was to insure the continuation of privileges and concessions which European imperialism had acquired in the Middle East, Koury, The Superpowers, p. 45.

Western defense pacts. He found, however, that the world looked very different from a Middle Eastern perspective:

(1) Most of the peoples of the Near East...are deeply concerned about political independence for themselves and others. They are suspicious of colonial powers. (2) A Middle East Defense Organization is a future rather than an immediate possibility. Many of the Arab League countries are so engrossed with their quarrels with Israel or with Great Britain or France that they pay little heed to the menace of Soviet communism. (3) In general, the northern tier of nations shows awareness of the danger...¹⁰⁶

emanating from their northern neighbor, are more concerned about potential Soviet aggression, and would not oppose accession to a Western defense organization.¹⁰⁷ Points 1 and 2 of Dulles's analysis are surprisingly accurate, and point 1 also free of Cold War rhetoric.

Dulles's analysis is perceptive, but what makes it truly remarkable is the fact that two years later the Secretary of State ignored his own still valid conclusions. Dulles had correctly identified several factors of great importance in Middle Eastern politics in the early 1950s: Arab nationalism, the wish to pursue independent policies, anti-colonialism, the perception of Israel as the foremost threat to Arab security, the awareness in the Northern Tier nations of a Soviet threat, and hence their willingness to accede to a Western defense pact.¹⁰⁸ To a certain extent Dulles heeded his own advice, since only the Northern Tier joined the Baghdad Pact. The problem was, however, that Prime Minister Nuri al-Sa'id, Iraq's foremost statesman, took Iraq, as the only Arab country, into the Pact, which polarized the Middle East political discourse in the extreme, making a united

¹⁰⁶ Footnote 41, John Foster Dulles, "Report on the Near East," Department of State Bulletin, vol. 28, no. 729 (June 15, 1953), pp. 831-35, quoted in Koury, The Superpowers, p. 48

¹⁰⁷ Koury, The Superpowers, p. 48.

¹⁰⁸ It is possible that Dulles chose to "disregard" his own assessment of the situation in the Middle East by reason of domestic policy, namely the upcoming presidential elections in 1956 and the need to pursue a foreign policy acceptable to conservatives and proponents of a firm foreign policy aimed at preventing Soviet inroads into the Middle East and protecting the state of Israel.

regional stance against Soviet influence impossible. The West did not even achieve unity within the Pact itself due to the strong opposition against it among Iraqi politicians and intellectuals.¹⁰⁹ Being an astute politician Nuri must have realized that his decision would provoke Iraqi intellectuals and his political opponents. The Prime Minister believed, however, that he had good reasons for acceding to the Pact. He had seen in 1953 how, in his, Eisenhower's, and Churchill's view, Iran had been on the verge of being taken over by communists in the Musaddeq era. This had convinced him that communism represented the greatest danger to Iraq, that protection against a communist attack could not be insured by the Arab League or by neutrality, and that the only option for Iraq and the Middle East, in his judgment, was close cooperation with the West.¹¹⁰

An objective high on Nasser's revolutionary agenda was to put an end to the British military presence in Egypt, a constant reminder of Britain's imperialist past. Difficult negotiations between the two countries over the future of the Suez Canal base eventually resulted in the signing of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Evacuation on July 27, 1954. The Treaty stipulated that Britain withdraw her troops in the Canal Zone by spring of 1956 and that she have right of access for an additional seven years to the huge system of bases in the Zone in the event of a military attack on a Middle Eastern country.¹¹¹ The British

¹⁰⁹ Waldemar J. Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1964), p. 56.

¹¹⁰ Wright to the Foreign Office, February 8, 1957, no. 43, Confidential, FO371/128038 Iraq: Annual Review for 1956.

¹¹¹ In such an event the Canal Zone Base would be critical for the defense of Western Europe, since it would enable Western bombers to strike at targets in the southern Soviet Union, Peter L. Hahn, The United States, Great Britain and Egypt, 1945-1956 (London: 1993), p. 53, referred to in Ashton, Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser, p. 38. The strategic location of the Canal Zone Base explains the Soviet reaction to the agreement, which was negative. Pravda stated that it "does not guarantee Egyptian territorial integrity, sovereignty, non-interference in its internal affairs, or equality in its relations with western countries...In concluding the agreement the Egyptian government is taking a dangerous step towards supporting American plans for a Middle East Command, which is a direct threat to the cause of peace in the Middle East," Pravda, August 8, 1954, quoted in Yodfat, Arab Politics in the Soviet Mirror, pp. 38-39.

were reluctant to give up their strategic bases, but believed a treaty with Egypt might result in some form of Egyptian association with a Western-sponsored collective security pact, a possibility which nourished hopes in London of a continued British role in the Middle East.

According to a telegram to the Foreign Office from the Embassy in Cairo

[t]here is however a possibility that our relations with Egypt and the other Arab States may improve considerably once the Suez question is settled, and that it may therefore be possible to revive the M.E.D.O. [Middle East Defence Organization] scheme, perhaps in some rather different form. This foundered before mainly on the Arabs' refusal to accept the scheme while the Suez question remained unsettled, though they also stated that a satisfactory settlement of the Palestine question would be a condition of their acceptance... It therefore seems that there is a remote possibility that an agreement with Egypt will eventually allow us to make progress towards the erection of a Middle East collective defence organization.¹¹²

Considering that a "satisfactory settlement" of the Palestine question meant the return of Palestinian refugees to their old homes in Israel the most appropriate way to measure the possibility of Egyptian accession to a West-sponsored defense organization would have been in geologic time, since Israeli leaders had already stated unequivocally that they had no intention of letting tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees return to Israel.¹¹³ The British assessment of a "remote possibility" must therefore be considered somewhat optimistic.

The reason the British wished to remain in the Canal Zone was that they were convinced that an evacuation would considerably weaken their strategic position in the Middle East. First, Britain would no longer be in a position to re-deploy troops at short notice from the Canal Zone to the Persian Gulf, Aden, and East Africa due to "loss of

¹¹² J.E. Powell-Jones, Cairo, to the Foreign Office, June 25, 1954, Secret, FO371/110827.

¹¹³ Itamar Rabinovich, and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., Israel in the Middle East: Documents and Readings on Society, Politics, and Foreign Relations 1948-present (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 96.

control over refueling stations, as well as the restrictions of overflying rights.”¹¹⁴ This in turn would also affect “the deployment of short-range fighter aircraft.”¹¹⁵ Second, London was concerned that a British withdrawal from Suez would increase tension between Tel Aviv and the Arab capitals and spark an arms race between the two sides.¹¹⁶ Third, a top secret paper circulated by the Middle East Joint Headquarters states that if the British Government continued “to regard the Middle East as an area of vital importance to our interests” Britain’s strategic objectives in the region “must be.”¹¹⁷

(a) to maintain and strengthen the influence and position which we have at great cost built up over the years and thus support our widespread political and commercial interests;”

“(b) to provide the nucleus for a successful defence of the area in war, to preserve the right flank of NATO, and to be in a position to fulfill our Treaty obligations in Iraq, Jordan, Libya and the Persian Sheikdoms.”¹¹⁸

The secret paper demonstrates how crucial the Canal Zone Base in Egypt was to Britain’s strategic position in the Middle East and that lost access to the base would seriously weaken the British position in the region and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s right flank.

This chapter has argued so far that the United States and Britain in their Cold War zeal to establish an anti-Soviet collective security system in the Middle East downplayed or completely disregarded the largely predictable impact local threat perceptions and the intensity of Arab nationalism would have on such efforts. In certain cases policymakers

¹¹⁴ Extract from Chief of Staff meeting held November 8, 1954. Top Secret, FO371/110827. Meeting with Air Marshall Sir Claude Pelly, Commander-in-Chief Middle East Air Force.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ P.S. Falla, August 18, 1954, Top Secret, FO371/110827.

¹¹⁷ Chief of Staff Committee, Joint Planning Staff, Middle East Joint Headquarters, Note by the Directors of Plans. Circulated for the consideration of the Chiefs of Staff J.P. (54) Note 24 (Revised), November 2, 1954, Top Secret, Special Circulation, FO371/110827.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. For a different view on the importance of the Canal Zone Base, see Ashton, Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser, pp. 42-43. Ashton argues that the Base was a military and political liability owing to Nasser’s determination to rid Egypt of the British military presence. Furthermore, Ashton contends that the H-bomb had made the base obsolete.

in Washington and London disregarded their own analyses, such as that of John Foster Dulles, and the warnings of a small number of their own diplomats in the region. A policy less focused on the ideological and strategic East-West conflict and more perceptive with regard to the legacy of British imperialism, American support for Israel, and covert C.I.A. operations in the Middle East, such as the 1953 C.I.A.-sponsored overthrow of the Musaddeq government in Iran, might have yielded a political climate of cooperation in this part of the world. Division was, however, not introduced by the West into the Middle East, although Western powers were to a certain degree responsible for the increased intensity of Arab discord. Traditional Egyptian-Iraqi rivalry, inflexibility on the part of national leaders, and diametrically opposed threat perceptions greatly contributed to the division in the Arab world, and the strident tone in Egyptian-Iraqi relations. Finally, international and regional politics in which Nuri was involved also had an impact on the domestic situation in Iraq to the extent that the prime minister's unpopular foreign policy resulted in an acrimonious domestic relationship between the regime and the political opposition in Iraq. This was also a manifestation of historical continuity with precedents in the early 1940s.¹¹⁹

The Baghdad Pact

A meeting in Cairo on September 14, 1954, at which Nuri had informed Nasser of his intention to sign a security cooperation agreement with Turkey and the Western powers later resulted in increased tension between Egypt and Iraq. Departing the Egyptian capital Nuri had had the impression that Nasser, in view of Iraq's special position (of being more

¹¹⁹ In 1948 the regime's pro-British foreign policy and the signing of the Portsmouth Treaty had led to nationwide anti-British and anti-government protests.

exposed than other Arab states to the possibility of a Soviet attack), had not objected to his plans.¹²⁰ Needless to say, the Egyptian account of the meeting was very different. The Egyptians claimed that Nasser had rejected cooperation with the West and asked Nuri to postpone the signing for two years.¹²¹ It is surprising that the two men came away from the meeting with diametrically opposite interpretations of what the other party had said. The possibility of a language problem can easily be dismissed since Nasser and Nuri must have communicated in Modern Standard Arabic (the language educated Arabs from different parts of the Arab world use to communicate with one another) and not in the Egyptian and Iraqi dialect. It is highly unlikely that Nasser would have sanctioned Iraqi membership in the Baghdad Pact, since this would have violated one of his basic principles, namely to keep non-Arab powers out of any collective Arab security pact.

There were other weighty reasons for Nasser not to accept Iraqi membership in the Baghdad Pact. At the time of the Cairo meeting it was more or less clear to Nasser that the West would not supply the weapons he was convinced he needed to defend Egypt and the Arab world against Israeli attacks. Consequently, in Nasser's view, there was not much incentive for him or any other Arab leader to join a Western security pact, since the Western powers would not provide arms which could be used against Israel. Accordingly, it appears highly unlikely that Nasser would have approved of Iraqi membership in the Baghdad Pact. A possibility is that Nasser and Nuri used circuitous and imprecise language during their talk and that this left what exactly they had agreed upon open to interpretation. The advantage of such an approach was that it left both leaders some leeway to maneuver without locking them into fixed positions. Another possibility is that

¹²⁰ Gallman, *Iraq Under General Nuri*, p. 38.

¹²¹ Muhsin Muhammad al-Mutawalli al-‘Arabi, *Nuri Basha al-Sa‘id: Min al-Bidaya ila al-Nihaya* (Bairut: Al-Dar al-‘Arabiyya li’l-Mawsu‘at, 2005), p. 351.

Nasser and Nuri spoke their mind, disagreed sharply on the Baghdad Pact, and decided to exploit the situation, each one to his own advantage. As it happens, the Baghdad Pact turned out to be the most divisive issue in the Arab world in the mid-1950s.

The deep division among the Arab states in the mid-1950s did, however, not originate with the formation of the Baghdad Pact. The tendency towards a division of the Arab world in two camps had begun prior to the signing of the Turco-Iraqi Pact on February 24, 1955 with the Iraqi-Egyptian rivalry for leadership in the Arab world. Nuri al-Sa'id's efforts to create a defense organization including Western, Arab, and the Northern Tier (Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan), however, greatly intensified the Iraqi-Egyptian rivalry, since such an organization would marginalize Egypt.¹²² Nasser had made clear at an early stage that he opposed Middle Eastern collective security arrangements which included non-Arab states.¹²³ Nuri's push for the formation of the Baghdad Pact would guarantee a leading role for Iraq in the region unless Nasser acted quickly. Nuri for his part was to a certain extent driven by similar fears—he had to act expeditiously to prevent Nasser from establishing Egypt as the leading power in the Middle East.¹²⁴ As a preparation for the

¹²² The Turco-Iraqi Pact was the nucleus of the Baghdad Pact, to which Britain, Pakistan, and Iran acceded later in the same year. The Turco-Iraqi Pact was formed in order to defend the two parties against possible Soviet aggression, which was also the rationale for the Baghdad Pact. Britain's accession to the Pact in April 1955 was the official confirmation that it was a Western project, a fact which would draw sharp criticism from Nasser as well as Iraqi nationalists.

¹²³ Persson, Great Britain, the United States, and the Security of the Middle East, p. 212. The Pact also polarized Iraqi society. It was received with demonstrations in al-Najaf among other cities, Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri, p. 56.

¹²⁴ Koury, The Super Powers and the Balance of Power in the Arab World, p. 14. Fathi al-Dib—a member of the delegation Nasser dispatched to Sarsank, Iraq, to explain to Nuri the serious threat to Arab security the planned Pact would pose—argues, however, that Nasser interpreted Nuri's alliance building as “an attempt to encircle him [Nasser] and confine the Egyptian revolution within Egypt's own borders, as an obstacle to one of the revolution's main goals—to liberate the Arab homeland,” al-Dib, ‘Abd al-Nasir wa Tahrir al-Mashriq al-‘Arabi, pp. 137-138, quoted in al-‘Arabi, Nuri Basha, p. 346. Accordingly, al-Dib does not view the power struggle between Nasser and Nuri as a contributing factor to the formation of the Baghdad Pact. Conversely, Nuri's perception of Nasser was that “Nasser had committed himself to communist Russia in 1952 or 1953 and had embarked with communist help on a policy of gaining first the leadership and then the control of the oil producing countries in the Arab world on whose revenues he

signing of the Turco-Iraqi Pact Nuri severed diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union on January 3, 1955, thereby unnecessarily alienating a great power. The Iraqi prime minister was the only head of government in the Northern Tier who took such an extreme step. Nuri's action confirmed to Moscow that the Pact was directed against the Soviet Union.¹²⁵ It is possible Nuri believed he would impress his allies by breaking relations with the U.S.S.R.

wished to lay his hands for the benefit of Egypt. He believed this to be the explanation of the increasingly bitter attacks on Iraq and the Baghdad Pact throughout 1955 and 1956....," Wright to the Foreign Office, February 8, 1957, No. 43, Confidential, FO371/128038, Iraq: Annual Review for 1956.

The British Ambassador to Cairo, Humphrey Trevelyan, reported as late as in February 1956 that there was a possibility an agreement could be reached with Nasser over the Baghdad Pact. Nasser and Foreign Minister Mahmud Fawzi had both stated that "if they could be sure that the Pact would stay as it is, they would be prepared to consider accepting the position of Iraq as a member of the Pact and working towards a practical but informal relationship between a revived Arab Security Pact and the Baghdad Pact, with Iraqi membership common to both," Humphrey Trevelyan, Cairo to Evelyn Shuckburgh, the Foreign Office, February 16, 1956, Secret, FO371/121651. It is unclear what Nasser meant by the phrase "stay as it is," and Trevelyan gives the reader no hint. Did it signify that the United States could not accede to the Baghdad Pact, or did he have something else in mind? Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia had already formed an alliance, and Sawt al-'Arab had already made clear in its propaganda broadcasts what Nasser thought of the Baghdad Pact. There is a remote possibility that Nasser believed that the Pact had been made innocuous since he had prevented other Arab states from adhering to it. It is more likely, however, that he was merely sounding out the British and Nuri to find out what they were prepared to offer. Finally, according to a report by the American Air Attaché high Iraqi army officers had dismissed Nasser's proposal to create a unified Arab Army with single commander. The officers had stated that the Arabs had not been able to fight as a unified army in Palestine, and Iraq would never accept to deal with its Northern Tier neighbors through an Egyptian commander, U.S. Air Attaché to Department of the Air Force, January 29, 1955, Confidential, 787.00(W)/1-2955, Army: Iraqi Army incensed over Egyptian reaction to proposed Iraqi-Turkish defense agreement.

In response to the Turco-Iraqi Pact of February 1955 Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia concluded an alliance in March 1955, which was further consolidated with a unified Egyptian-Syrian command in October the same year. The alliance was a propaganda victory for Nasser and resulted in Iraq's isolation in the Arab world, since Nuri failed to persuade any Arab state to accede to the Baghdad Pact, Gerges, The Superpowers and the Middle East, pp. 29 and 48. Patrick Seale, Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), p. 51, referred to in Gerges, The Superpowers and the Middle East, 48. Former Iraqi Prime Minister Fadhil al-Jamali was not critical of the Baghdad Pact in the context of being the reason for the Soviet presence in the Middle East. During a speech at the UN as the leader of an Iraqi delegation he instead blamed the presumably Western "policy of discrimination against the Arabs and the denial of their legitimate right" for enabling the Soviet Union to achieve a position of influence in the region, The Iraq Times, November 18, 1955, p. 3.

¹²⁵ An article in Izvestiya, based on an editorial in the Lebanese newspaper Al-Akhbar, stated the following in response to Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes' visit to Baghdad: "Furthermore, the newspaper [Al-Akhbar] indicates that the Iraqi government's severing of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union did not occur by chance on the eve of Menderes' visit to Baghdad. This act by the Iraqi authorities shows that Nuri al-Sa'id's government, encouraged by the American imperialists, is attempting to draw Arab states into the military blocs of the Western countries, directed against the Soviet Union and the people's democracies [of the Soviet bloc]", Izvestiya, January 12, 1955, p. 4. Without doubt the Lebanese editorial

It appears that Nuri had serious concerns about Egyptian reactions to the Turco-Iraqi Pact. Ahmad Mukhtar Baban, the last prime minister of Iraq before the revolution, states in his memoirs that Nuri al-Sa‘id had second thoughts about the Baghdad Pact project. Nuri “explained to Menderes that he had agreed with Abdul Nasser that Egypt be part of any agreement between Iraq and Turkey and he added that he feared that any separate agreement between Iraq and Turkey would anger Egypt and lead to a misunderstanding between him and Abdul Nasser.”¹²⁶ Menderes had disagreed, however, and pressed vigorously for a Turco-Iraqi pact. Baban’s account appears to lend support to the argument that Iraqi-Egyptian rivalry was not a significant factor in the formation of the Baghdad Pact, but most likely the traditional Iraqi-Egyptian rivalry played a certain role in Nuri’s strategic thinking, since the Pact meant that Iraq would have allies both among Western powers and the Northern Tier states, while Nasser had no such friends. In Nuri’s mind the Pact was indubitably not just a security arrangement, but an alliance which would enhance Iraq’s regional and international status as well. These considerations certainly played an important role during the negotiations for the Baghdad Pact, even if Nuri was concerned about Egyptian reactions.

The signing of the Turco-Iraqi Agreement on February 24, 1955 and the formation of the West-sponsored Baghdad Pact was a catalyst for a number of subsequent developments in the Middle East such as the Egyptian-Syrian-Saudi alliance. In response

also reflected the Soviet position on Menderes’ meeting with Nuri. One Western source states that “[n]o event in the Middle East could have alarmed the Soviet Union as the formation of the Baghdad Pact,” Heinemann-Grüder, *Sowjetische Politik*, p. 73. The official Soviet reaction to the formation of the Baghdad Pact came on April 16, 1955: “The Soviet Government...will defend the freedom, independence and non-interference in the internal affairs of the states of the Near and Middle East,” *Ministerstvo Inostrannykh Del SSSR: SSSR i Arabskie Strany, 1917-1960 gg. Dokumenty i Materialy*, Zayavlenie Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del SSSR o Bezopasnosti na Blizhnem i Srednem Vostoke, Moskva 1961, p. 116, quoted in Heinemann-Grüder, *Sowjetische Politik*, p. 73.

¹²⁶ Ahmad Mukhtar Baban, *Mudhakkirat* [Memoirs], pp. 78-79, referred to in al-‘Arabi, *Nuri Basha*, p. 353.

to the Turco-Iraqi Pact of February 1955, Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia formed an alliance in March 1955, which was further consolidated with a unified Egyptian-Syrian command in October the same year. The alliance was a propaganda victory for Nasser and resulted in Iraq's isolation in the Arab world, since Nuri failed to persuade any Arab state to accede to the Baghdad Pact. The Egyptian-Syrian-Saudi alliance was, however, successful neither in the military nor the economic field, since its main purpose was to prevent Syria from acceding to the Baghdad Pact, an objective which it indeed achieved.¹²⁷

A second consequence of the formation of the Baghdad Pact was the Czech arms deal. Nasser had previously repeatedly and unsuccessfully attempted to purchase arms he believed he needed from the West.¹²⁸ When the Israeli attack on Gaza came a few days after the signing of the Turco-Iraqi Pact it exposed Egypt's military weakness and underscored the need to turn elsewhere to acquire weapons to defend Egypt.¹²⁹ An

¹²⁷ Gerges, The Superpowers and the Middle East, pp. 29 and 48. Seale, Asad of Syria, p. 51, referred to in Gerges, 48.

¹²⁸ Soon after the revolution in July 1952 Nasser had told the American Ambassador, Jefferson Caffery, that American arms sales to Egypt "would enhance the prestige of the United States," assuring the Ambassador that such arms would not be used for offensive purposes, Haykal, Nasser, p. 48. Furthermore, the Free Officers had contacted the American Embassy and offered to cooperate with the United States "in opposing communism in return for 'military supplies and financial assistance from the U.S.,"' The Ambassador in Egypt (Caffery) to the Department of State, Cairo, September 18, 1952; the Secretary of State to the Secretary of Defense (Lovett), Washington, November 21, 1952, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, vol. ix, part 2, pp. 1860-1861, 1889, referred to in Gerges, The Superpowers and the Middle East, p. 31. The Free Officers even went as far as to indicate that they would join a Middle East defense organization. Needless to say, the Americans did not take Nasser at his word. One factor which contributed to the American reluctance was a telephone call from the British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill, who asked President Eisenhower not to sell arms to Nasser, since they might be used to kill British soldiers. The old regime had purchased and paid for 80 British Centurion tanks, but only sixteen were delivered after the revolution, with a promise that the rest would be delivered when Egyptian propaganda against the Baghdad Pact ceased, Heikal, Nasser, pp. 50, 56.

¹²⁹ Several sources state that the Israeli raid, coming four days after the signing of the Pact, led Nasser to suspect that the two events were linked and part of a Western conspiracy to destroy him. Prior to the Israeli attack the Free Officers had focused more on social and economic reform and given less priority to enhancing military capabilities, 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi, Mudhakkirat [Memoirs], vol. i (al-Qahira: Al-Maktab al-Misri al-Hadith, 1977), p. 197; Majmu'at Khutab al-Nasir, 1952-58, vol. i, pp. 418, 690-91; Salah Nasr, Mudhakkirat: Thawra 23 Yuliu baina al-Masir wa al-Masir, al-Usul [Memoirs: The 23 July

opportunity was offered in April at the Bandung Conference when Nasser asked Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai to convey to the Soviet Union a request for arms. The request was granted by Moscow.¹³⁰ Nasser would have preferred to purchase Western arms, however, and informed U.S. Ambassador Byroade of the Soviet offer, probably in the hope that the Americans would have a change of heart regarding the moratorium on arms transfers to Egypt.¹³¹ Dulles believed that both Nasser and the Russians were bluffing and dispatched the C.I.A. official Kermit Roosevelt to Cairo in September 1955 to convey to the Egyptian president that the United States might have to sever diplomatic relations with Egypt or impose an economic blockade if the Egyptians followed through with the arms deal.¹³² The British Ambassador Sir Ralph Stevenson also warned Nasser that an arms deal with the Soviet bloc would have dangerous consequences.¹³³

Dulles's decision to exercise pressure on Nasser and even to threaten him with serious consequences revealed that the American Secretary of State was not well informed about the Egyptian leader's personality and that Dulles disregarded his own analysis of 1953 of political sentiments in the Middle East in favor of ideological considerations. Nasser was clearly under great pressure in 1955 to counter what he perceived as a three-pronged

Revolution Between Departure and Progress, the Roots], vol. i, p. 241; Anwar al-Sadat, Ya Waladi Hadha 'Ammuka Gamal [My Son: This is Your Uncle Gamal] (al-Qahira: Maktaba al-'Irfan, n.d.), pp. 138, 140, referred to in Gerges, p. 32. It is possible that Nasser was influenced by a Soviet-Syrian agreement to supply Soviet arms to Syria concluded at the end of 1954, Heinemann-Grüder, Sowjetische Politik, p. 75.

¹³⁰ Helen Denkos, Al-Siyasa al-Sufyatiyya fi al-Sharq al-Awsat, 1955-1975 [Soviet Foreign Policy in the Middle East, 1955-1975] (Bairut: Dar al-Kalima al-'Arabiyya, 1983), p. 23, referred to in Gerges, The Superpowers and the Middle East, p. 34; Haykal, Nasser, p. 57.

¹³¹ Gerges, The Superpowers and the Middle East, p. 34.

¹³² Al-Baghdadi, Mudhakkirat, Vol. I, pp. 204-205, referred to in Gerges, The Superpowers and the Middle East, p. 35. It is quite possible that Roosevelt conveyed the message referred to above to the Egyptians. Al-Baghdadi's argument that the reason was that Dulles believed that both Nasser and the Russians were bluffing is not quite convincing. Why threaten someone who you believe is bluffing? Dulles was most likely convinced that Nasser was bluffing, but a more plausible reason for the threats was that the Secretary of State wished to teach the Egyptian leader a lesson, letting him know that he was not supposed to "blackmail" the West.

¹³³ Heikal, Nasser, p. 59.

threat emanating from the Western powers, Israel, and Iraq's membership in the Baghdad Pact. For Dulles in such a situation to resort to threats in order to eliminate what the Egyptian leader viewed as the only remaining option open to him to protect Egyptian national security interests—the purchase of arms from Czechoslovakia—only increased Nasser's recalcitrance with respect to Western pressure.¹³⁴ The issue of arms transfers to Egypt, became a major problem in the eyes of the Western powers, since it opened the door to a Soviet presence in the Middle East. Conversely, the possession of modern arms in his military arsenal was a sine qua non to Nasser, since he believed he would not be able to play the leading role in the Arab political arena without modern military equipment. Nasser had from early on evinced a wish to cooperate with the West in return for Western arms, a reasonable proposal in Nasser's view, but unacceptable to the Western powers. The reason is that the latter would then have had to supply at least the same, and probably more weapons to Israel, which in turn would have angered the Arab states, triggered further requests for arms, and increased the risk of a new Arab-Israeli military conflict.

The above discussion of the Baghdad Pact has yielded the conclusion that the decision-making processes in Cairo, Baghdad, Washington, and London were similar in one respect. Egyptian, Iraqi, American, and British leaders alike made decisions frequently based on ideological considerations. This does not mean that economic and political considerations were not important. The argument advanced here, merely contends that the ideological-strategic dimension was the only consideration which was important in all four capitals with regard to Middle Eastern policies. In Washington and

¹³⁴ Nasser had already proven his tenacity in 1954 when the British had signed the Anglo-Egyptian Evacuation Treaty of July 27, 1954 stipulating the British evacuation of the Canal Zone Base.

London policies towards the Middle East were invariably formulated against the backdrop of the ongoing ideological-strategic conflict with the Soviet Union. In Baghdad decisions were made on the basis of ideology and Nuri's dream of the Fertile Crescent project and Iraqi leadership in the Arab world.¹³⁵ Finally, in Cairo Nasser was guided in his decision-making by his pan-Arab outlook, concerns about decisions which might prove detrimental to his standing in the Arab world, and his conviction that non-alignment was the true path for the Arab states. All four parties evinced lack of flexibility for the above reasons but it appears that Dulles's, Eden's, and Nuri's strong urge to punish the trouble-maker in Cairo for breaking ranks with the Western powers over which policies were in the best interests of the Arab world was an important reason for the subsequent crisis in the relations between Egypt and the Western powers.

Not every diplomat in the State Department and the Foreign Office, however, was convinced of the wisdom of U.S. and British policies towards the Middle East. Unlike Dulles, the American Ambassador to Cairo, Byroade, argued that the Czech arms deal should not be viewed in terms of the East-West ideological conflict, but as a necessary initiative for domestic reasons.¹³⁶ The British Ambassador to Syria, F. G. K. Gallagher, also saw the increasing Soviet influence in the Middle East from a perspective which differed from the official line. Gallagher argued that

Communism is generally considered in Syria as a lesser danger than a) Israel and b) 'colonialism.' It is exactly the part played by the West in the Palestine question which has been the principal cause in Syria for the growth of sympathy with the Soviet Union...[I]t has certainly been of great service to the local Communist

¹³⁵ The Fertile Crescent was Nuri's dream of a federation including Iraq, Syria, and Jordan, which would be open to other Arab states for accession. For a detailed discussion of this project, see Chapter 5.

¹³⁶ The Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State, Cairo, September 21, 1955, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955, vol. xiv, pp. 497-498, referred to in Gerges, The Superpowers and the Middle East, p. 37.

Party in enabling it to appeal on patriotic grounds to an audience to whom the doctrinaire aspects of Communism have little attraction.¹³⁷.

The irony here is that the policies adopted by the United States and Britain towards the region resulted in exactly what they were meant to prevent: they created support for the Soviet Union among people who were not communists.

Could policies based to a lesser extent on ideological considerations have yielded less tension? Such policies would certainly have produced a less confrontational approach to Nasser, but would still most likely not have fulfilled all the wishes of Nuri, Dulles, and Eden. The analysis above suggests that the principal mistake of the Western powers in formulating policies towards the Middle East was their failure or reluctance to view Nasser as a representative of a new tier of nations, the products of the decolonization process, which had acquired a new momentum after World War II. Despite their intense ideological conflict with the Soviet Union, the Western powers might have given greater consideration to the strong natural urge of nations recently granted independence, to pursue policies, which were not formulated in London, Paris, or Washington.

Could a more psychologically sensitive American and British approach to Nasser have excluded the Soviet Union from playing a role in Middle Eastern affairs? The West's support of Israel and the large number of Palestinian refugees would sooner or later have lead to an enhanced role in the region for the USSR. The record of the actual policies adopted, however, is unequivocal: they considerably aggravated tensions in the Middle East, alienated Arab nationalists, and enabled the Soviet Union to establish a strong presence in the Arab world. Had less confrontational policies been adopted by the West, the intensity of the East-West rivalry in the region could probably have been reduced, and

¹³⁷ F. G. K. Gallagher, Damascus to Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, October 29, 1954, Despatch no. 170, Secret, FO371/110846.

reoriented from an ideological and security conflict to a rivalry in terms of trade, and educational and cultural influence. The Western powers with their superior resources would have been at an advantage in such competition, had they adopted truly egalitarian principles in their dealings with Middle Eastern countries and not prioritized their own interests over those of the states in the region.

There appears to have been lost opportunities with regard to East-West relations in the 1950s following the end of the Stalin era. Had the United States and Britain pursued such policies as discussed above and attempted to achieve some form of cooperation with the new leaders in the Kremlin following Stalin's death—instead of simply continuing policies laid down during the Stalin era—it is possible that a four-party agreement on a moratorium on arms transfers to the Middle East could have been reached with the Soviet Union. In February 1956 Khrushchev had stated that the Soviet Union should sell arms to the Middle Eastern states which wished to purchase Soviet arms, since the West supplied members of the Baghdad Pact with military aid. At the same time, however, he indicated that the Soviet Union would accept a moratorium on arms transfers to the Middle East, if this could be arranged with the West.¹³⁸ The United States failed to explore whether Khrushchev was serious about this proposal, the reason most likely being that Washington wanted to maintain the paramount Western position in the Middle East and exclude the Soviet Union from playing any role at all in the region, even at the expense of peace. It appears that such an international understanding, if enforced by the parties to the agreement, would have been the best policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict short of an actual peace treaty.

¹³⁸ U.S. Department of State, Documents on Disarmament, 1945-1959, vol. i (Department of State Publication 7008, 1960), p. 615, quoted in Koury, p. 57.

The argument laid out above will most likely be dismissed as utopian by some scholars. Most analysts will probably contend that foreign relations, and by implication diplomacy, are determined by national interest. The point here, however, is that national interest is the end, and that there is normally a number of paths leading to the same goal. Policymakers thus usually have a choice between employing means which will possibly achieve the objectives with a minimum of negative consequences, and employing ways to reach the same goal but with a negative fallout. In the case of the Middle East, British and American policies in the 1950s frequently belonged in the second category as argued in this chapter. America's standing in the Middle East prior to the U.S. support for the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 was positive and therefore strong. Unlike Great Britain, the United States was seen as a benevolent power which played an important role in education and health care by running institutions of higher learning and hospitals. Furthermore, America was in the early twentieth century perceived by Iran and later by the population in former Ottoman provinces, who was placed under the mandates of Britain and France, as a power which could protect Iran against the imperialist policies of Britain and Russia. Furthermore, the Arabs in the former Ottoman Empire regarded the United States as a power which would be a much better trustee than France and Britain. This shows that the U.S. presence in the Middle East prior to the creation of Israel and other policies analyzed above was perceived as something positive.

The overarching argument advanced in this chapter is that events which transpired in the Middle East in the 1950s reflected a historical continuum. The developments discussed above therefore did not constitute a clear break with earlier historical processes, such as imperialism, nationalism, and cooperation among non-Western states.

What differed from previous eras was rather the intensity of these forces in the context of decolonization and the Cold War. Not even the creation of the state of Israel—by all appearances a new element in Middle Eastern developments—constituted a break with previous historical processes, since it was largely a manifestation of a Western presence in the region which had begun much earlier. Cooperation across borders among Muslims had occurred in the nineteenth century when Jamal al-Din al-Afghani had spread ideas of cooperation against Britain from India to the Ottoman Empire, and during and after World War I in the form of the Khilafat movement. Finally, Soviet policies towards the Middle East in the 1940s and 1950s reflected earlier Tsarist aspirations to establish a strong Russian presence in the region.

INDEPENDENT IRAQ AND NURI AL-SA‘ID—DOMESTIC POLICY (1)

This chapter primarily addresses three questions, the answers to which partly help explain why a revolutionary situation developed over time in Iraqi society and eventually erupted in a revolution in 1958: (1) To what extent were British and American diplomats aware of the social and political problems Iraq was facing in the 1950s? (2) What was Nuri al-Sa‘id’s reading of the social, economic, and political situation in Iraq in the period preceding the Revolution? (3) How did Nuri respond to opposition? Was brutal force simply a predictable reaction on his part, or did he also apply more subtle methods in dealing with his political opponents? Following a brief examination of the Mandate period, a detailed analysis of the situation in Iraqi cities as well as in the rural areas will provide some of the data necessary to address the above questions. The three questions posed above are important because they will establish whether British and U.S. policies in Iraq were based on available intelligence, and what might be the reason if they were not. Nuri’s reading of the situation in Iraq and his approach to political dissent will go a long way to explain his domestic policies.

The argument with regard to the quality of British and American intelligence on the pre-revolutionary situation in Iraq will in part be based on whether the findings presented suggest that the Western powers “ought to” have realized how serious the situation was in Iraq. The second question above, regarding Nuri’s reading of Iraq’s domestic situation, raises the question of his assessment of the strength of the opposition to his regime. The omnipresent Criminal Investigation Department, Iraq’s secret police, provided Nuri, on a

regular basis, with detailed intelligence on any manifestations of dissent and opposition in Iraq. Consequently, in his case the question of why he interpreted the disturbing intelligence which was available to him the way he did, is of much greater relevance for the present analysis than whether he was aware of the consequences of his policies. The third question, how Nuri dealt with political opposition, like the second, has implications for Nuri's political legacy, since the answer might depict him in a somewhat more favorable light than simply as an extremely authoritarian politician ready to resort to force at the slightest provocation.

The League of Nations Mandate and Nuri's Early Career

The Iraqi monarchy was created by the British on August 23, 1921. Following a few years of occupation during and after World War II the three former Ottoman vilayets, provinces, of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul were combined into a new state established as a British mandate by the League of Nations.¹³⁹ Britain introduced a form of parliamentary system with Faisal I as King. A Hijazi by birth, Faisal had fought on the side of the British against the Ottoman Empire in World War I to liberate Arab provinces under Ottoman control. Following an unsuccessful attempt to establish himself as king of an independent Syrian state consisting of the Ottoman vilayet of Damascus, Faisal had been compelled to pull out of Syria in 1920 when the French army had moved in to set up the

¹³⁹ Philip Willard Ireland, Iraq: A Study in Political Development (London: Kegan Paul Limited, 2004, first published in 1937), p. 158; Malik Mufti, Sovereign Creations: Pan-Arabism and Political Orders in Syria and Iraq (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 23.

mandate which had been assigned to France by the League of Nations.¹⁴⁰ The following year he had been offered the throne of Iraq by the British.¹⁴¹

The British mandate over Iraq was established by the League of Nations, since the Iraqis were not considered by the great powers at the Paris Peace Conference to possess sufficient political maturity to govern themselves, a fact which guaranteed Iraqi dependence on Britain even after independence. The Iraqis gradually learned to use the system to their own advantage, however, to eventually terminate the mandate enabling their country to become a member of the League of Nations in 1932.¹⁴² Iraq's independence was merely relative, however, in the sense that the former mandatory power retained a high military, political, and administrative profile in the new state, having made the signing of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 a precondition for independence. The Treaty granted Britain, for the period of twenty-five years, inter alia, the right to maintain air bases in Iraq and provided for British access to Iraqi territory in times of war.¹⁴³ The system which had been introduced by the British under the mandate thus enabled them to exercise influence in Iraq even after independence in 1932. As a result, the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty and subsequent attempts to replace it with other treaties, such as the Portsmouth Treaty of 1948 and the Baghdad Pact of 1955, were vilified by many Iraqis as colonial infringements on Iraq's status as an independent state.

¹⁴⁰ Mufti, Sovereign Creations, p. 43.

¹⁴¹ For a detailed account of the search for a king for Iraq, see Ireland, Iraq: A Study.

¹⁴² Majid Khadduri, Independent Iraq 1932-1958: A Study in Iraqi Politics (London: Oxford University Press, second edition 1960, first edition published in 1951), p. 366. Independence, however, did not usher in an era of parliamentary democracy. A clear obstacle to transparency was the disregard for parliamentary control and preference for authoritarianism, which the nationalists who succeeded the British evinced. As a result, in the post-WWII period younger nationalists clashed with the older politicians in their attempts to rectify a system which had gone awry.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 311-12.

The history of pre-revolutionary Iraq is intimately linked to the public career of Nuri al-Sa'id, Iraq's foremost statesman. A brief introduction to the life of this both remarkable and hated man will therefore be useful for understanding his policies in the period between 1955 and 1958. Nuri's military background—he had attended military schools in Baghdad and the Military College in Istanbul in his youth—the fact that his father was a prominent Ottoman civil servant in Baghdad, and that Nuri was conversant in Turkish, English, French, and German in addition to his native Arabic, made him well prepared for a prominent government career. When the British occupied Basra during World War I, Nuri, as an Ottoman officer was convalescing in hospital. He was taken prisoner and moved to India. In 1915 the British decided that he could be of use for the Arab Revolt of 1916-1918 and sent him to Cairo. He served as Deputy Commander in Chief of the Arab army under Faisal during the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire in World War I. He later traveled to the Paris Peace Conference with Faisal's delegation to argue for independence for the liberated former Ottoman Arab territories. Between 1921 and 1930, when Nuri was first appointed prime minister, he organized the Iraqi police force, the Iraqi Army, and the Ministry of Defense. Nuri's political career—he served fourteen times as prime minister between 1930 and the Revolution of 1958—testifies to his unique role in forming the policies of his country together with Crown Prince 'Abd al-Ilah.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Salih al-Basam, Mudhakkirat wa Asrar Hurub Nuri al-Sa'id [Reminiscences and Secrets of Nuri al-Sa'id's Flight] (Bairut: Arab Diffusion Company, 2003), pp. 143-151; Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri: My Recollections of Nuri al-Said, 1954-1958 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1964), pp.10-13; Khadduri, Independent Iraq, pp. 370-372. After graduation from the Military College in 1906 he served for a few years as a tax collector in the tribal areas of Iraq, until he returned to Istanbul to attend the Staff College. Having seen action in the Balkan War in 1912, he left Istanbul to return to Iraq via Cairo before the outbreak of World War I to avoid arrest, since he had raised the authorities' suspicions with his sympathies for Arab independence.

During World War I and the mandate period the British had put into operation in Iraq a legal system which effectively divided the population into two parts, and a parliamentary system which did not allow direct balloting. For one part of the population justice was administered according to the Baghdad Penal Code, and for another part the Tribal Law was applied.¹⁴⁵ The latter had been modeled after a similar law the British applied in India to the tribal areas there.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, the British enabled tribal leaders to acquire what had hitherto been communal lands, thus guaranteeing the support of a class of landowners, while perpetuating the *iqta'*, the semi-feudal system prevalent in Iraq's tribal areas.¹⁴⁷ The mandate also introduced a parliament, consisting of a senate and a chamber of deputies, into Iraqi political life. This legislative body, however, had little resemblance to the British parliament, since the deputies were selected by the government and by indirect balloting, thus depriving the Iraqi people of a direct role in electing their political representatives. As a result the Chamber of Deputies was made up of "tribal shaykhs, aghas, and town politicians who had been sympathetic to British

¹⁴⁵ Caractacus (Norman Daniel.), Revolution in Iraq: An Essay in Comparative Public Opinion (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1959), p. 37. "Caractacus" was the pseudonym used by Norman Daniel for his book Revolution in Iraq.

¹⁴⁶ Caractacus (Daniel), Revolution in Iraq, p. 38. The so-called "Tribal Criminal and Disputes Regulation" had been drawn up by Henry Robert Conway Dobbs, and was modeled on the Indian Frontier Crimes Regulation. Dobbs had previously served as Revenue and Judicial Commissioner to Baluchistan. He served as High Commissioner to Iraq in 1923-1929. The administrative system used in the Iraqi tribal areas—based on the central role of the tribal shaikhs—was an adaptation of that developed by Sir Robert Sandeman in Baluchistan in 1875. Ireland states that this system "gave little opportunity for the operation of civilizing processes, for the growth of less primitive social codes and of more progressive forms of government. The system in 'Iraq tended to become a method of control rather than a system of government in its broadest sense," Ireland, Iraq: A Study, pp. 85-86, 89, 94-95.

¹⁴⁷ By virtue of this system the tribesmen were turned into "debt-bonded serfs" of the shaikhs, effectively separating the economy in the tribal areas from that of the rest of the country. The system tended "to generate severe distortions in the country's economic and political systems...", Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett. "The Transformation of Land tenure and Rural Social Structure in Central and Southern Iraq, c. 1870-1958," International Journal of Middle East Studies, 15, 1983, p. 491, quoted in Simons, Iraq: From Sumer to Saddam, p. 210. The *iqta'* was a semi-feudal system, which made the fallahin completely dependent on tribal shaikhs. The latter were, after the arrival of the British, more or less in a position where they controlled tribal lands as their personal property.

rule”¹⁴⁸ In summary, the legal and political systems introduced by the British insured that economic, legal, and political power was concentrated in the hands of a small number of individuals.

The political, economic and legal systems introduced by the British during the occupation of the Ottoman vilayets in World War I and also during the mandate period in the 1920s were more or less still in place in the 1950s. As to the Chamber of Deputies the population had been given a certain role in electing the deputies, but the government was in a strong position to influence the election process thus insuring that “undesirable” deputies were barred from the Chamber, a method which Nuri al-Sa’id had applied in the elections to a new parliament in 1954.¹⁴⁹ The legal, economic, and political system the British had put in place during the mandate thus guaranteed a continued British influence in the post-mandate period, since it created an oligarchic class of landowners and politicians who owed their social standing to Britain. Finally, the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930, which took effect upon the League of Nations’ recognition of Iraq’s independence in 1932, also guaranteed that the close ties between Britain and Iraq established in the 1920s would continue, albeit in a modified form, in the post-mandate period. With the introduction of the above systems the British had placed instruments in the hands of a limited circle of individuals who were thus able to perpetuate their hold on power throughout the pre-revolutionary era.

¹⁴⁸ Ireland, Iraq: A Study, p. 166, quoted in Samira Haj, The Making of Iraq 1900-1963: Capital, Power and Ideology. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 82.

¹⁴⁹ Nuri believed the Parliament elected in June would be difficult to work with owing to the presence of opposition politicians, Muhammad Husain al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz 1958 fi al-‘Iraq: Asbabuha wa Muqaddamatuha wa Tanzimat al-Dhubat al-Ahrar (Baghdad: Da’irat al-Shu’un al-Thaqafiyya wa al-Nashr, 1983), p. 89.

The Situation in the Cities

During the post-World War II period social strife in the cities was a serious problem to the regime. The huge numbers of poor peasants and farm laborers leaving the semi-feudal conditions in the rural areas in search of a better future in Iraq's urban centers put a serious strain on city administrations and the clearly insufficient construction of new housing, in particular in Baghdad. As a result most poor migrants ended up settling in sarifas, slums, which were periodically flooded by the Tigris, and where the squalid conditions posed a serious health hazard to the inhabitants.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, this situation posed a potential security problem to the authorities.¹⁵¹ The difficult social conditions in combination with high inflation, shortages in staple and consumer goods in the 1940s and 1950s, and restrictions on political activity and civil liberties had resulted in student demonstrations and workers' strikes, which had in turn led to further political repression.¹⁵² The periods of repression had often coincided with Nuri's terms as prime minister and had sometimes been succeeded or preceded by periods of more liberal policies when he was out of office.

¹⁵⁰ Caractus (Daniel), Revolution in Iraq p. 39; Geoff Simons, Iraq: From Sumer to Saddam (Houndmills and London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1994), p. 210. According to Doreen Warriner, "[t]here is much trachoma and dysentery, but no bilharzias or malaria, because the water is too polluted for snails and mosquitoes. The infant mortality is 250 per thousand. A woman has a 50:50 chance of raising a child to the age of ten. There are no social services of any kind," Doreen Warriner, Land Reform and Development in the Middle East: A Study of Egypt, Syria and Iraq (London, 1987), pp. 187-188, quoted in Simons, p. 210. According to the lowest estimate as many as two hundred thousand migrants lived in Baghdad's sarifas alone by 1958, Uriel Dann, Iraq Under Qassem: A Political History, 1958-1963 (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., Publishers, 1969), p. 5.

¹⁵¹ Chancery, British Embassy Baghdad to Levant Dept, the Foreign Office, Confidential, August 5, 1955, FO371/115748. The British Embassy expressed concern in a telegram to the Foreign Office that the rapid migration from the countryside "is likely to create a dangerous security situation in the towns when the winter comes and much contracting and building activity comes to an end," implying that the ensuing unemployment among migrant workers might cause social unrest, especially since there were no signs that the Government was preparing to deal with the issue.

¹⁵² Haj, The Making of Iraq, 1900-1963, p. 98.

A contributing factor to the increasingly repressive measures against all political opposition in the 1950s was increasing oil revenues. Putting the national oil wealth to use for the benefit of the whole of Iraq by initiating government-sponsored projects was a praiseworthy endeavor. The 1952 Oil Treaty between Iraq and the Iraq Petroleum Company introduced a 50:50 profit basis. The increasing revenues from the petroleum industry had a serious drawback, however—they made the regime less dependent on raising taxes, and more impervious to the criticism of the political opposition.¹⁵³ Increasing oil revenues thus made the Iraqi Government less inclined to encourage popular participation, since the steady flow of oil revenues kept the government coffers filled to the brim.

With the increasing opposition over time to Nuri's policies came more repressive measures. This was a favorite approach of Nuri's to dealing with a difficult situation, although his absence from power did not mean absence of repression. Incarceration was, however, not necessarily always Nuri's initial first choice in response to opposition. He often tried co-optation first, and only then applied various forms of pressure when the former did not work. He had a strong belief in co-optation and often sent gifts to political opponents whose support he solicited, thereby revealing, according to one scholar, the profound impact of Ottoman traditions on Nuri in his formative years.¹⁵⁴ During a two-year period while Nuri was out of office a violent uprising, the intifadha of 1952, erupted after the Regent 'Abd al-Ilah had decided to ignore the opposition's demand that the head of state reign but not rule, that civil liberties be granted to the Iraqis, and that a system of direct elections replace the old electoral system, which made rigged elections possible.

¹⁵³ Ibid., pp. 104-105; Khadduri, *Independent Iraq*, p. 354.

¹⁵⁴ Caractacus (Norman Daniel), *Revolution in Iraq*, p. 46.

The opposition had also demanded that the regime's close ties to the West be replaced by a policy of nonalignment.¹⁵⁵ The ensuing uprising in Baghdad was crushed at the end of November of 1952 after communist demonstrators had burned the United States Information Service library, and police had shot and killed eighteen protesters the following day. The intifadha was a clear statement of opposition to 'Abd al-Ilah's policies, and the demands of the political parties an unequivocal indication of the wishes of the population.

Nuri's absence from power and the intifadha had led to certain successes for the opposition parties during Prime Minister Nur al-Din Mahmud's term in office, but these achievements were eliminated as soon as Nuri returned to office. When martial law, imposed almost a year earlier, was lifted in October 1953 strikes soon erupted and new disturbances took place. Elections were held in June of 1954 and the opposition, united in the National Front, succeeded in getting eleven of its candidates elected to the Parliament. The regent invited Nuri al-Sa'id to form a new government and one of his first acts was to dissolve the new Parliament and hold new elections in September to create a more malleable legislative body, which he did by rigging the polls.¹⁵⁶ Nuri's

¹⁵⁵ Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 667. The regent's excuse for not yielding to the demands of the opposition was that there was a "properly elected" Parliament and a "responsible" government in place whose duty it was to look into the demands. Encouraged by the Egyptian Revolution in July, the National Democratic Party's memorandum (one of several memoranda presented to the regent on October 28, 1952) left no doubt about the opposition's demands, as shown by the following quotation: "The people want radical reform, including the abolition of feudal estates [iqta'] and limitation of landownership, rejection of tax increases, liberation of the national economy from foreign exploitation and control, and nationalization of projects connected with public services. The Iraqi people [also] want the departure of all foreign forces from its country and the abrogation of the 1930 [Anglo-Iraqi] Treaty. It rejects every form of collective security and wants to announce its neutrality towards the international blocs," Fadhil Husain., Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki fi al-Iraq [The Overthrow of the Monarchic Regime in Iraq] (al-Qahira: Jami'at al-Duwal al-'Arabiyah, al-Munazzama al-'Arabiya li al-Tarbiya wa-al-Thaqafa wa al-'Ulum, Ma'had al-Buhuth wa al-Dirasat al-'Arabiyah, Qism al-Buhuth wa al-Dirasat al-Tarikhiya, 1974), p. 51.

¹⁵⁶ Batatu, The Old Social Classes, pp. 686-687. Even though only eleven opposition candidates were elected, Batatu calls the election campaign preceding the June elections "the freest in the history of the monarchy." Gallman writes: "It was one of the liveliest campaigns in Iraq's history, with political rallies in

further actions during his sixteen-month term in office, August 1954-December 1955, were to cancel all freedoms restored in 1953, ban political parties, cultural clubs, trade unions, place restrictions on the press, and clamp down on communists.¹⁵⁷ Naturally, such acts did not endear him to political opponents, the intelligentsia, and workers.

Rigged elections and increasing repression resulted in reduced popular trust in the political system. A British Embassy report of 1956 reflects how serious the situation was:

[O]pposition from various quarters is becoming slowly but surely more critical as the restrictions placed on its liberties become more irksome. It is encouraged by the fact that the elections for the present Parliament in September, 1954, had been even more blatantly rigged than usual, and by the belief that the present landowners in Parliament would effectively block any kind of reform which might weaken their powers, while the Government were not able, or willing, to force their hands.¹⁵⁸

This British report has correctly identified the political and social ills of the country and serves as further evidence of the fact that British and American diplomats were well informed of the difficult situation in Iraqi cities and the activities of the opposition in response to Nuri al-Sa'id's policies.

The Situation in the Countryside

The poor conditions in the cities were matched by those in the rural areas, to which fact testifies the migration of destitute peasants and farm laborers to Iraq's urban centers. This situation continued due to the lack of interest on the part of the regime in enforcing a law passed in 1951, providing for the distribution of unoccupied state lands to peasants

all parts of the country. Some of these turned into anti-government demonstrations of such violence that the police had to intervene to safeguard lives and property...Garden walls of private homes were painted with slogans which, in support of National Front candidates, denounced the West and advocated neutralism," Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri: My Recollections of Nuri al-Sa'id, 1954-1958 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1964), p. 4. Wright to the Foreign Office, Confidential, May 17, 1955, FO371115759.

¹⁵⁷ Haj, The Making of Iraq, p. 106.

¹⁵⁸ Wright to the Foreign Office, Confidential, January 11, 1956, FO371/121640.

who were also to receive state grants. A further problem was depletion of the soil owing to inadequate irrigation.¹⁵⁹ Also, the existence of the twentieth century *iqta'* system in Iraq's rural areas, a semi-feudal system, exacerbated lax government policies, since it served as a more or less insurmountable obstacle to the introduction of a system which would reduce the power of the shaikhs and large landowners. Finally, the low productivity of and labor-intensive methods employed by *iqta'* seriously impeded industrial development, while putting a damper on the growth of a consumer market and a home market for local industry.¹⁶⁰ The *iqta'iyya* was thus the main reason for the poor conditions in rural areas and constituted the primary obstacle to development in the agricultural sector.

Large landholders completely dominated economic life in the countryside. This fact is reflected by the following statistics: on the eve of the Revolution 67.1 percent of registered land in Iraq was owned by landlords in the form of estates of over 1,000 dunums (approximately 600 acres), while only 15.7 percent of the land was owned by peasants with up to 100 dunums (approximately 60 acres); despite the law of 1951 referred to above, the majority of the rural population of 3.8 million owned no land.¹⁶¹ On occasion the peasants rebelled against these conditions, "but on the whole they were

¹⁵⁹ Warriner, Land Reform and Development, pp. 181-182, referred to in Simons, Iraq: From Sumer to Saddam, p. 210.

¹⁶⁰ Haj, The Making of Iraq, p. 79.

¹⁶¹ Dann, Iraq Under Qassem, p. 4; Batatu states that before the July 14 Revolution, in terms of proprietors, "72.9 percent of all landholders possessed less than 50 dunums, and only 6.2 percent of the total area...about four-fifths of the families of Iraq owned no land whatever. At the same time fewer than 1 percent of all landholders and *mallaks* [landowners] controlled 55.1 percent of all privately held land," Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 55. In pre-revolutionary Egypt the situation was somewhat similar: 35 percent of the land was in possession of 94 percent of the landowners, and 6 percent of the landowners owned 65 percent of the land, Anwar Ali, "The Present Situation in the Middle East As Seen By Middle Easterners," in The Evolution of Public Responsibility in the Middle East, p. 15.

passive, inarticulate, resigned and apathetic...”¹⁶² The problem of landownership, however, persisted even after July 14, 1958 with 3,400 large estates making up two-thirds of the cultivable land and 50 percent of such land owned by 2,500 people out of a total Iraqi population of around seven million as late as 1960.¹⁶³ In 1956 at least 70 percent of the population was engaged in agricultural work with approximately 54 percent primarily being paid in kind and only to an insignificant degree or not at all participating in the money economy. An American Embassy report concluded that the majority of Iraqis lived in small villages eking out an existence as tenant farmers and agricultural laborers.¹⁶⁴

The typical Iraqi peasant, fallah, led an insecure existence farming land held by a landlord in exchange for part of the crop. The fallah’s position was not very secure since his landlord could remove him and his family from the land at will. Most fallahin (plural of fallah) were members of the same tribe as the shaikh (tribal leader). A minority, however, belonged to other tribes but lived in the tribe’s area with the permission of the shaikh. The maximum share of the produce that the fallah received did not exceed 50 percent from which he had to deduct expenses for seeds, cattle, and various farm implements.¹⁶⁵ It is estimated that a fallah’s average annual income in 1951 was US\$58, compared with Iraq’s per capita income of US\$85 in 1949.¹⁶⁶ The fallah’s situation was not made easier by the fact that his only source of credit was the moneylender whose

¹⁶² Simons, Iraq: From Sumer to Saddam, p. 210.

¹⁶³ This data obviously pertains to the post-monarchic era, but is relevant to the discussion of the situation in the rural areas, and has therefore been included here.

¹⁶⁴ W. Clyde Dunn, Chargé d’Affaires, Baghdad to Department of State, Despatch 67, Secret, July 26, 1956, 787.00/7-2656.

¹⁶⁵ Rony Gabbay, Communism and Agrarian Reform in Iraq (London: Croom Helm, London, 1978), pp. 25-27.

¹⁶⁶ International Bank of Reconstruction and Development, The Economic Development of Iraq (Baltimore, 1952), pp. 132-133, referred to in Rony Gabbay, Communism and Agrarian Reform in Iraq, p. 28.

interest rate could be as high as 50 percent per annum. On an average 25 percent of what a fallah's land yielded went to paying interest on loans. Furthermore, the peasant's inability to pay off his loans made him even more dependent on the landlord.¹⁶⁷ How harsh life as a peasant was is reflected in the fact that his life expectancy only was 35.9 years.¹⁶⁸

The situation in Kut Province southeast of Baghdad was illustrative of the problems reform-minded local officials had to deal with regarding the situation in rural areas and the resistance to change on the part of powerful local landlords. In the town of Hai communist-inspired demonstrations in December of 1956, prompted by the Suez Crisis the previous month, had led to a number of deaths in violent clashes between the police and protesters. In an interview with a U.S. Embassy official in October of 1957 the governor of Kut Province stated that "the underlying conditions and the deep discontent which create an atmosphere responsive to Communist efforts still continue."¹⁶⁹ Almost the whole population of the town, 12,000-15,000, was still made up of individuals who had no means to support themselves, having been driven off the surrounding agricultural lands for various reasons. It is obvious from the reference to the appeal of communism above that the American Embassy official took the poor conditions in Kut seriously and wished to emphasize that they were politically explosive.

Even with a reform-minded governor it was almost impossible to introduce reforms in rural areas. A case in point is the governor in Kut Province. The governor had attempted

¹⁶⁷ Gabbay, Communism and Agrarian Reform, p. 28.

¹⁶⁸ M. Critchley, "The Health of the Industrial Worker in Iraq," British Journal of Industrial Medicine, vol. 12 (1955), referred to in Gabbay, Communism and Agrarian Reform, p. 29. See Gabbay, Communism and Agrarian Reform, pp. 25-30, for a detailed discussion of the conditions in which the fallahin lived.

¹⁶⁹ Nicholas G. Thacher, First Secretary of Embassy (For the Ambassador), to the Department of State, Confidential, October 17, 1957, 787.00/10-1757.

to interest the central government in establishing some small industries in Hai, which in his opinion would have had a rejuvenating effect on economic activity in the area, but had encountered strong local opposition to his efforts. A serious obstacle he had had to overcome was two shaikhs who were also large landowners. The two, who were brothers, collected over 50 percent of their tenants' produce, a practice which guaranteed the shaikhs an annual income of ID500,000 apiece, enabling them to exercise sufficient influence in Baghdad to frustrate the governor's attempts to improve the lot of the poor in the town, "even interfering with Government claims to lands coming properly under Government control."¹⁷⁰ The most likely explanation for the governor's failure to introduce reforms is corruption and Nuri's personal strong opposition to any reduction in the size of rural land holdings.¹⁷¹

The presence of widespread problems similar in nature to those described in the previous paragraph, did not prevent the American Embassy from making a positive assessment of the general situation in Iraq. The Embassy's appraisal of the situation in the summer of 1956 was optimistic, praising the Nuri government for its strong and vigorous policies. A report emphasizes Nuri's success in reestablishing political stability to the country, at the same time expressing slight regret: "In doing so, however, it [the Nuri government] has had to rely to a large extent upon enforced restriction on political and press activities and has as a result incurred some measure of public resentment."¹⁷² Although this was written before the Suez Crisis and the ensuing violent reactions in Iraq, it comes across as a clear understatement to claim that Nuri's activities have "incurred

¹⁷⁰ Nicholas G. Thacher, First Secretary of Embassy (For the Ambassador), to the Department of State, Confidential, October 17, 1957, 787.00/10-1757.

¹⁷¹ Dann, Iraq Under Qassem, p. 10.

¹⁷² W. Clyde Dunn, Chargé d'Affaires, to the Department of State, Despatch 67, Secret, July 26, 1956, 787.00/7-2656.

some measure of public resentment,” in particular in view of recurring student demonstrations and opposition criticisms with regard to the regime’s alleged violations of civil rights. The report further commends the government’s development program pointing out that “there has been a large increase in construction and business activity in the major cities, though few benefits have filtered to the lowest level as yet.”¹⁷³ The report suggests that American Embassy officials were aware of existing negative consequences of Iraqi government policies, but that they did not attempt to assess how serious these consequences were (in the case of the development program), or simply underestimated them (as in the case of resentment incurred by Nuri’s authoritarian policies).

In the mid 1950s relations between peasants and landlords became increasingly polarized. The summer of 1955 saw the largest peasant demonstrations since World War II in Amara province. The situation got completely out of hand when 20,000 fallahin kept the whole harvest and expropriated land belonging to landlords. The authorities managed to suppress the rebellion only after large police forces were called in, resulting in numerous arrests and executions.¹⁷⁴ The following spring the situation in the countryside became even more explosive when peasant uprisings erupted anew. In Kut Liwa’ the authorities grew so alarmed when peasants expropriated land and refused to pay their rents to the landowners that both the police and the army had to be called in to deal with the situation.¹⁷⁵ The events referred to in this paragraph thus show that fallahin in some

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Teleghraf, July 9, 1955, referred to in Aleksei Fedorovich Fedchenko, Irak v Bor’be za Nezavisimost’ 1917-1969 (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Nauka, 1970), p. 205.

¹⁷⁵ Fedchenko, Irak v Bor’be za Nezavisimost’ p. 205.

parts of Iraq were increasingly taking matters into their own hands out of frustration with their economic and social situation.

A British Embassy report dated December 1957 confirms the picture presented in the American report on Kut Liwa' referred to above:

The main cause of the trouble is the large feudal landlords. The peasants are oppressed and hardly able to scrape a living, with the result that they leave the land and come into the towns, where, however, there is little work for them...It seems that these people [the chief landowners] not only oppress the peasants but have such influence that they are beyond the law. The Mutasarrif [governor]...claimed that he was unable to control them because of the influence they enjoy in Baghdad. No law has been passed for the distribution of land in Kut Liwa'.¹⁷⁶

The situation was similar in Amara Liwa' where approximately half of the population lived in "conditions of hideous squalor and poverty..."¹⁷⁷ Many of them had only occasional employment and the family income ranged from ID4-5 per month. The problem with land distribution in Amara Liwa' was that the lands belonged to the government but the best lands were controlled by the local shaikhs. The conditions they imposed on the peasants were such that many of the latter could not make a living from tilling land and left it. A land distribution law for Amara Liwa' had been passed in 1955, stipulating that 50 percent of the land exploited by the shaikhs be distributed to the peasants and that the rest of the land remain with the shaikhs. The latter had resisted the law and had found a loophole in it allowing them to allocate the peasants' land to their own relatives. Again conservative leaders in the rural areas had proven a formidable obstacle to any progress in the countryside.

¹⁷⁶ Wright to Selwyn Lloyd, Foreign Office, Confidential, December 31, 1957, FO371/134197, report by Oriental Counselor Samuel Falle.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

Distribution of state-owned land to the fallahin did not necessarily translate into higher living standard for them. Despite the shaikhs' resistance some land had been distributed to peasants. These peasants were, however, dependent on the shaikh for water, since he controlled the pumping machinery, and had to give him in return part of their crop. This led the author of the British report, Sam Falle, to express skepticism about the prospects for success, which was not likely unless the problems of water and credit could be resolved. As a consequence, there was not much hope that the migration from the rural areas would stop or that the dwellers in the sarifas would benefit from the land distribution law.

Based on the situation described above Falle's report concluded the following:

...[T]he standard of living is shamefully low. The main causes are predatory landlords and inefficient farming. The impact of the Development Programme has hardly been felt. There is no obvious or immediate danger of disturbances but the basis is present for both communism and anarchic nationalism. (In Kut I was told that the communists would win a free election). This would be whipped up either by political events outside Iraq or by continued government refusal to take firm action against the sheikhs or a combination of both. Everyone I spoke to was highly critical of government policy...The new agricultural settlements must not be left to fend for themselves or they will fall under the power of the sheikhs. The vital essentials initially are guarantees of water, loans for purchase of seed and probably fertilizer and equipment, and a cooperative marketing scheme...If nothing more is done...it will quickly be assumed that the Government...is no better than its predecessors and is under the influence of the wealthy sheikhs.¹⁷⁸

Falle's insightful analysis correctly identified the two main problems in the rural areas as being the shaikhs' domination of economic life and the government's inefficiency with regard to introducing long overdue reforms, a situation which in the long run would endanger Iraq's stability.

¹⁷⁸ Wright to Selwyn Lloyd, Foreign Office, Confidential, December 31, 1957, FO371/134197, report by Oriental Counselor Sam Falle. Falle was probably the most clear-sighted analyst among British and American diplomats in Baghdad. Characteristic of his reports is his strong language in describing the ills of Iraqi society.

The above quote is a clear testimony to the existence in the administration of officials who tried to address the dangerous situation in the countryside and who realized that the wretched conditions in which much of the rural population lived could be exploited by radical political forces if nothing was done by the authorities. Falle's quite critical report identifies the shaikhs as the fundamental impediment to change in rural areas. Equally important is his observation that the Development Program had hardly had any impact in the countryside. This suggests that the projects of the Development Board had contributed little to improving conditions at the grassroots level in two of Iraq's liwa's. Given that the Program most likely was the regime's best chance for survival, one can conclude that the future of the monarchy looked very bleak on the eve of the Revolution. Furthermore, Falle's report cast doubt on the argument that had the regime been given two more years, the Development Program would have had such widespread impact that the monarchy would have survived. If the program, established in 1950, had not yet (seven years later) had any significant impact on the life of the poor majority of the rural population during its seven-year existence, it is hard to imagine that it would have been able to improve conditions so radically in such a short period of time that it would have prevented the Revolution.

The American and British diplomatic reports discussed above in this part of the chapter are of particular interest since the source is the same for both, but the conclusions the authors draw differ greatly. The American report downplays the problematic situation in the Iraqi countryside and the resentment caused by Nuri's authoritarian policies, while emphasizing the stability the Nuri government has reestablished to the country. Conversely, the British report, stresses the problematic situation in rural areas, implicitly

expressing great concern about the Development Program. This part of the chapter has also established that British and American diplomats, through meetings with local officials, were well aware of the problems in the countryside and the flaws in the regime's policies towards the rural population.

Opposition and Repression in the Mid-1950s

This chapter has argued that opposition to official policies grew after World War II and that the political parties realized in the 1950s that their best hope of introducing social and political reform in Iraq was through setting their differences aside and joining forces in a National Front. Therefore, in December of 1955 the opposition again presented the king with a memorandum.¹⁷⁹ This memorandum was similar in content to that of 1952 presented to 'Abd al-Ilah. Simultaneously with these open attempts to press for reform, opposition parties and groups also engaged in clandestine political activities, such as distributing illegal journals, newspapers, and fliers among the population.¹⁸⁰ Iraqi governments also temporarily had to deal with Egyptian-based Voice of Free Iraq's strident anti-regime broadcasts.¹⁸¹ Cooperation among opposition parties was further strengthened in 1956 when they formed the United National Front (Jabhat al-Ittihad al-Watani), including, inter alia, the Istiqlal Party, the Ba'th Party, the National Democratic Party, and the Iraqi Communist Party. The Front's program included "Arab solidarity

¹⁷⁹ Al-Fiha', January 19, 1956, referred to in Fedchenko, Irak v Bor'be za Nezavisimost', p. 206.

¹⁸⁰ Fedchenko, Irak v Bor'be za Nezavisimost', p. 205.

¹⁸¹ The Iraq Times, June 13, 1955.

against imperialism and Zionism” in addition to points from earlier memoranda presented to the regime.¹⁸²

External events and forces, such as the Suez Crisis, anti-Zionism, and British imperialism, also contributed to fueling opposition to Nuri’s policies. The violent suppression of a demonstration in al-Najaf on November 25, 1956, following the British-French-Israeli attack on Egypt, in combination with public dissatisfaction with government policies towards Egypt resulted in an apparently spontaneous uprising in the northern, central and southern parts of the country. In the town of Kut al-Hai the situation deteriorated to the extent that rebels took over the town for two weeks and surrendered only after artillery units had been called in to suppress the rebellion.¹⁸³ The events in Kut al-Hai clearly shows that some Iraqis who opposed Nuri’s policies were prepared to take up arms to fight the authorities. Combined with the occurrences of peasant expropriations in rural areas discussed above this indicates that a revolutionary situation had developed in certain areas, and that the reasons for this were both internal and external.

On August 11, 1957 the opposition again submitted a petition signed by twenty-two prominent leaders to the new prime minister, Ali Jawdat al-Ayyubi, criticizing the previous Nuri government’s policies and calling for the lifting of restrictions imposed on civil liberties. The signers of the petition stated that “[m]artial administration, instead of

¹⁸² Gabbay, *Communism and Agrarian Reform*, p. 59. Fedchenko states that the National Democratic Party and the Iraqi Communist Party had established contact in the spring of 1956 and the Istiqlal Party had joined them in the summer. In February of 1957 the three parties and the Ba’th Party formed the United National Front. The Front’s objective was to overthrow the monarchic regime, dissolve the Parliament, withdraw from the Baghdad Pact, pursue a policy of positive neutrality, grant Iraqis civil liberties, and release political prisoners, Fedchenko, *Irak v Bor’be za Nezavisimost’*, p. 215. The adoption of the Front’s program is a clear indication that by February of 1956 a revolutionary situation had developed in Iraq.

¹⁸³ ‘Aziz al-Shaikh, *Jabhat al-ittihad al-watani wa al-muhamal-tarikhia al-mulaqat ‘ala ‘atiqha fi al-zaraf al-rahin* (Baghdad: 1959), p. 11; *Sovremeny Vostok*, no. 8 (1957), pp. 15-16, both sources referred to in Fedchenko, *Irak v Bor’be za Nezavisimost’*, pp. 209-210. According to al-Shaikh, one of the leaders of the Iraqi Communist Party, the uprising failed due to the weakened state of the opposition parties following Nuri’s onslaught on the political parties in 1954, and due to limited peasant and Kurdish participation.

being a means of checking defeatism was used against the liberals who expressed their nationalist sentiments by condemning that aggression.”¹⁸⁴ They further emphasized that hundreds of citizens had been arrested and imprisoned by the Nuri government. Implicit in the petition was the following warning to al-Ayyubi: “it is not in the public interest to let citizens grow desperate waiting for the return of normal life and the reapplication of those provisions of the Constitution which pertain to the rights of the people.”¹⁸⁵ The petition is evidence of how oppressive the Nuri regime had been in the eyes of the opposition.

In summary the petitioners demanded that Nuri’s political legacy be done away with. The petition requested that the prime minister: (1) “eliminate the last remaining effects of martial law”¹⁸⁶; (2) “release political prisoners...”; (3) “reinstate teachers and students who have been convicted of political offenses”; (4) “permit the organization of political parties and labor unions”; and (5) “lift restrictions on the Iraqi press as well as on the free circulation of certain newspapers, currently banned, from other Arab countries.” The American Embassy commented as follows on the petition:

It is perhaps significant that the list of persons who signed the petition includes every important element of the so-called opposition. Indeed it would appear that the NDP-Istiqlal grouping, the leftists, the ultra-nationalists, and others have all found common cause and have joined forces against the government. If and when party life is resumed, such a coalition could prove a very political force.¹⁸⁷

This comment reveals that U.S. diplomats were primarily concerned about the formidable force the united opposition would constitute, if allowed to engage in normal political

¹⁸⁴ Emmett B. Ford, Second Secretary of Embassy (for the Ambassador), to the Department of State, Confidential, August 20, 1957, 787.00/8-2057.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Emmett B. Ford, Second Secretary of Embassy (for the Ambassador), to the Department of State, Confidential, August 20, 1957, 787.00/8-2057. Compare the opposition’s demands in 1952, footnote 143.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

activity. The implications of the implicit warning in the petition mentioned above were obviously considered to be a lesser problem, which need not be commented on, a somewhat surprising position in the light of the series of violent demonstrations and uprisings which had occurred in recent Iraqi history.

The above petition was a clear indictment of Nuri's policies and as such also shed light on the methods he had applied to silence opposition. Each one of the demands put forward in the 1957 petition exemplified a specific measure Nuri had taken to silence dissent and opposition. Martial law had been declared only when an uprising or "chaos" had threatened. In his defense one must, however, point out that Nuri had not made indiscriminate use of martial law, a fact to which testified his refusal to take such a serious step when pressed to do so by his government in February of 1955.¹⁸⁸ Incarceration of political opponents, including party leaders and other prominent politicians whom he had considered too dangerous to remain at large, was a measure Nuri had frequently resorted to throughout his political career, in particular against alleged communists. Like politicians, dissenting teachers posed a potentially serious threat to Nuri's governments, since they had access to large and critical audiences. Students belonged in the same category, since they could easily influence large numbers of fellow students. Political parties were banned, since Nuri would have provided them with an opportunity to mobilize political support and he would have had to accept criticism had they been allowed to operate. Finally, Nuri's closing of critical newspapers and his

¹⁸⁸ Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri, p. 49.

emotional reaction to Egyptian critical broadcasts shows that he had a troubled relationship with the press and broadcast media¹⁸⁹

Nuri had special arrangements for communists, teachers, students, and the press, which go to show that he, despite his authoritarian rule when in office, had a certain amount of patience with political opponents. He believed stripping an individual of his citizenship was an effective method to combat the spread of communism. This barred Iraqis residing abroad from returning home and also made it possible to deprive troublesome communists in Iraq of their civil rights. Interestingly enough, Nuri also offered incarcerated communists a peculiar opportunity to repent by signing a document to the effect that they renounced their communist belief in exchange for freedom.¹⁹⁰ It is not quite clear why this option was open to communists, since Nuri could not possibly expect such a renunciation of faith to be sincere, or perhaps he believed that most communists would not agree to do such a thing, since their political conviction was more important than their personal freedom. On the other hand, he might have believed that there was still hope to turn those communists who were “weak in spirit” into law-abiding citizens, since they presumably would not wish to re-experience an Iraqi prison from the inside.

¹⁸⁹ On June 13, 1955 The Iraq Times reported that The Voice of Free Iraq, a radio station broadcasting anti-Nuri propaganda from the Egyptian-controlled Gaza strip, had announced that it would cease its broadcasts. This announcement coincided with an official note from the Egyptian government delivered to the Iraqi government expressing gratitude for an Iraqi offer to extend assistance to Egypt in case of an Israeli attack on Gaza. This suggests that it was not a coincidence that the radio station Nuri so loathed had gone off the air, though the official Iraqi explanation was that the station had ceased its broadcasts as a result of Iraqi and Arab pressure on the Egyptian government. Almost three years later, in May of 1958, the same paper reported that the Iraqi government had protested strongly to the U.A.R. government against the “malicious” broadcasts of the same station, The Iraq Times, May 10, 1958.

¹⁹⁰ Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri, p. 94. At the end of March of 1956 about fifty communists had been released from prison, having signed “disavowals” of communism. Further releases were expected as soon as the inmates in question had signed their statements. Half a year later the press reported that “more than 10 Communist prisoners will be released very shortly. They have signed written pledges to renounce Communism and become loyal citizens.” Two of the prisoners had been “denationalized” in 1955, but would be reinstated after their pledges, The Iraq Times, October 29, 1956, p. 2.

In the case of teachers and students Nuri most likely believed that they all had an Achilles heel—their love for learning, teaching, and academia, which would eventually keep them from engaging in political activities. The first consequence when students, teachers, or junior officials had taken part in communist or Peace Partisan demonstrations was expulsion from school or dismissal from work. According to a list published in October of 1954, fifty-three arrested demonstrators were junior government officials out of a total of 119 and the rest were students. Students were then shipped off to the Army, which, however, did not appreciate the presence of unruly elements in its ranks. Special units were therefore organized for students.¹⁹¹ Nuri probably argued that what students and teachers alike resented the most was a strictly regulated life with the foremost duty being to obey orders, which is why military service was the most suitable punishment for “freethinkers.”

At the time of the Suez Crisis, however, Nuri had demonstrated that he could resort to very harsh measures when he deemed them necessary. His government had sent the police into classrooms in Baghdad, al-Najaf, and Mosul to suppress protests with the result that several secondary school students had been killed during these operations. The

¹⁹¹ Gallman, pp. 93-94. The majority of persons on three subsequent lists were students. The first list mentioned above must have alarmed the authorities since such a large part of the arrested was made up of government officials, albeit in junior positions. Gallman makes no attempt to explain the discrepancy between the first and the subsequent lists with regard to the considerable drop in numbers of government officials. Furthermore, he does not provide any clue as to the time span between the first and the last list, which makes it difficult to analyze his data. It is possible that the decrease in arrests and dismissals of junior officials could be explained by a deterrent effect the punishment had on junior officials, and that those who had not been arrested simply decided to keep a low profile. Conversely, if the Interior Ministry drew this conclusion it should have caused even greater alarm. If dissident government officials expressed their dissent in public they provided the Ministry with a clue as to their numbers, whereas that would not be the case if they decided not to voice their opinion. The first list could have constituted the tip of an iceberg, and if that were the case surveillance instead of arrest or dismissal would have provided the authorities with better intelligence. Norman Daniel writes that students were often given a second chance. If they had been involved in politics and wished to enter college, however, they needed to produce a certificate of “good behavior” issued by the police. The same kind of certificate was required for government employment. It goes without saying that “good behavior” meant conformity with official policies, Caractacus (Norman Daniel), p. 54.

regime had a network of agents at its disposal, possibly numbering as many as 24,000. These informers kept the authorities up to date on what was being discussed in teashops, schools, and colleges. The police was considered such an important pillar of the regime that its budget (£7.5 million) exceeded that of the Ministry of Education (£6 million).¹⁹²

This part of the chapter has argued that Nuri was quite inventive in formulating policies aimed at neutralizing the political opposition, and that the methods he applied in this confrontation were not exclusively based on brute force. Nuri often initially resorted to less violent means to deal with his political opponents, and then increased the pressure when these measures did not yield the desired result. Finally, he could also reverse the order by initially taking quite repressive steps, which were then followed by a more lenient approach.

The chapter as a whole has contended that British and American diplomats were well informed of the difficult economic, social, and political situation in Iraqi urban centers and of the opposition's activities in response to Nuri's policies. Through meetings with local officials these diplomats were also aware of the appalling conditions in the rural areas and of the inefficient policies aimed at addressing these problems and realized that the exodus of fallahin from the countryside would pose a security threat in the cities where available employment was seasonal. Finally, Nuri, like the foreign diplomats, was aware of the social, economic, and political ills of Iraqi society but was convinced that he had the means to deal with these problems—repression against, and persuasion and cooptation of the political opposition, and by investing oil revenues in development projects in the rural areas. The Development Program proved to have no significant

¹⁹² Caractacus (Daniel), pp. 52-53.

impact on the situation of the fallahin, since the projects did not destroy the shaikhs' economic power and social authority. Nuri believed that he could not eliminate the shaikhs' power owing to the simple fact that they constituted his own power base.

INDEPENDENT IRAQ AND NURI AL-SA'ID—DOMESTIC POLICY (2)

This chapter is a continuation of the examination of Nuri al-Sa'id's domestic policy in the previous chapter. The focus here, however, will be on the Iraqi press and British influence in the country. Both these forces in Iraqi politics had important implications for the Iraqi Revolution and the latter part of the chapter will address what these implications were in the context of the question whether the Revolution could have been avoided. The first issue to be addressed is whether the reporting in Iraqi newspapers to a certain extent reflected the true state of affairs in the country and if the public and foreign diplomats were in a position to draw accurate conclusions regarding the internal situation in Iraq based on reporting which was frequently indirect and left it to the reader's analytical skills to interpret the contents of print media. The second question which this chapter will provide an answer to is what the extent of British influence in Iraq was prior to the Revolution.

If this analysis yields the conclusion that Britain exercised strong influence over Iraqi domestic policies it would make her partly "responsible" for the Revolution. Should the evidence suggest, however, that British leverage with Iraqi governments only went so far, it would clearly reduce Britain's "responsibility" for what happened in 1958. This chapter will also analyze what might have been the reason if Western diplomats did not arrive at the conclusion that the situation in Iraq was grave. The answer to this question will in turn reveal whether alternative policies were available to Nuri, and if so, why he did not pursue a less controversial domestic policy to reduce the possibility of revolution.

The Iraqi Press and Censorship

The press appears to have been the political opponent that Nuri had the most patience with. Despite restrictions on what could be reported in the press he must have looked the other way when newspapers veiled their criticism by suggesting improvements to policies instead of criticizing responsible policymakers. Furthermore, journalists were free to criticize Israel, and French policies in Algeria, but not the Baghdad Pact or British policies towards Iraq. In order to establish whether the Iraqi public and Western diplomats were in a position to keep abreast of the true state of affairs in Iraq by reading the Iraqi press, reporting in Iraqi newspapers, including the British-controlled English-language daily The Iraq Times, will be examined briefly. The question that needs to be asked is whether newspapers were compelled to completely gloss over social ills in order to please Nuri or other leaders, and in order to avoid persecution by the Iraqi Government. As has been mentioned above, Nuri revoked the licenses of a large number of newspapers and journals during the first month after his return to power in August of 1954 and promptly re-licensed “a half dozen... on condition that they would exercise self-control.”¹⁹³ Should the findings from reading the Iraqi press suggest that newspapers,

¹⁹³ Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri, p. 98. The U.S. ambassador calls the re-licensed journals the more responsible and claims without elaborating that the majority of the newspapers and journals whose licenses were not renewed had relied on blackmail to continue publication. Gallman does not put “responsible” or “blackmail” in quotation marks wherefore it has to be assumed that he has taken Nuri’s words at face value. When his Press Ordinance was subjected to criticism in the Chamber of Deputies, Nuri stated that the rationale for the Ordinance was to address public complaints “against the ‘confusion’ that prevailed in the press. The press had been penetrated by elements which used it as a tool for propagating subversive ideas aimed especially at the younger generation. There were also certain persons who had converted the press into means for extracting money through blackmail. Previous legislation was inadequate for curbing these practices.” Interestingly, Gallman points out that the press was filled with criticism and advice within two weeks after Nuri’s resignation in June of 1957. Freedom of expression continued under the new prime minister ‘Ali Jawdat al-Ayyubi, although his minister of the interior, Sami Fattah, tried to rein in the press by threatening to withdraw government advertising if newspapers indulged in too much freedom, Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri, pp. 98-99. Norman Daniel evinced considerably more skepticism towards the Iraqi press than did Gallman, basically claiming that Nuri’s restrictions deprived the press of any ability to present newsworthy material to the public, since they just repeated the official line.

despite restrictions on what could be printed, presented the public with clear clues to the real state of affairs in the country, it can be assumed that British and American diplomats were well informed about developments and public opinion in Iraq. The question is whether the conclusions they drew in any way reflected the possibility of what would happen on July 14, 1958, and whether the contents of Iraqi newspapers indirectly suggested such a possibility.

Corruption was a subject of interest to journalists and the public alike. In 1956 a committee was appointed to address corruption in government and it began work by the end of the year. The committee focused initially on the civil service and by the end of November, the first month the committee operated, six high-ranking officials in the Ministry of the Interior had been dismissed, and thirty-four other officials in the civil service had been suspended.¹⁹⁴ The right-wing nationalist newspaper Al-Yaqza voiced some veiled criticism in December of 1955 before the committee began work. The paper criticized some previous governments which had attempted purges, but had not targeted “the higherups who should have headed the purge lists.”¹⁹⁵ The obvious implication of this claim is that the individuals who ought to be targeted were those in powerful

¹⁹⁴ Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri, p. 126. Gallman viewed this as “a healthy beginning.” Norman Daniel is not impressed with the committee’s record, however, arguing that it did not touch the senior officials in the regime, Caractacus (Daniel), Revolution, p. 34. Daniel gives a detailed account of how the corrupt system in Iraq worked on pages 29-35. The Iraq Times reported in December of 1956 that the purge committee was touring central and southern Iraq requiring all officials with a monthly income of above ID27 to fill out a questionnaire. The last list of names collected by the committee had resulted in the discharge of more than 30 officials, The Iraq Times, December 5, 1956, p. 2. The officials discharged are most likely the same as those Gallman refers to in his book.

¹⁹⁵ The Iraq Times, December 10, 1955, p. 8. In August moderately leftist Al-Hurriya stated that internal reform is not possible without first purging the government machinery of corrupt elements. The reason is that there “were many instances where important men were assigned to vital positions which they exploited to enrich themselves thus degrading the name of the position they held,” The Iraq Times, August 11, 1955, p. 8. This is a very blunt accusation and a very dangerous one at that, since the newspaper states unequivocally that there had been instances of corrupt elements in high positions. It is difficult to explain why the authorities would allow such candid criticism, but they most likely chose to interpret the editorial as critical of high officials who had served in previous non-Nuri governments.

positions and that this held true for the current government headed by Nuri al-Sa'id as well. Al-Yaqza's statement corroborates the argument that even though the press was subject to restrictions on what could be reported and commented on, veiled criticism was possible. It is not clear, however, why such statements were not censored. They might have passed unnoticed, or the regime might have regarded them as innocuous. A third possibility is that Interior Ministry officials simply drew other conclusions than the one offered here.

Another issue which was discussed in the press was the backwardness in rural areas. The independent¹⁹⁶ newspaper Al-Bilad criticized the unequal conditions in cities and rural areas, with the former, Baghdad in particular, being developed, while "some of the villages are living in conditions which existed hundreds of years ago...[and] others do not even know what modern amenities are." The paper argues that "revenues should be spent equally on Baghdad as on the smallest village in some distant part of the country," the reason for this being that "every one of the five million Iraqis has a right to enjoy the benefits that accrue from the oil."¹⁹⁷ It is obvious that the discrepancy between city and countryside was a serious problem. How serious an issue this was, is clear from the phrase "conditions which existed hundreds of years ago." This is most likely a reference to iqta', the prevalent semi-feudal system in rural areas, and a term which was probably too "revolutionary" to be used, since it might imply class struggle. The paper thus points

¹⁹⁶ Al-Bilad's status as an independent newspaper was confirmed in an American Embassy report, Nicholas G. Thacher, First Secretary of Embassy, to the Department of State, Unclassified, June 26, 1957, 787.00/6-2657.

¹⁹⁷ The Iraq Times, July, 14, 1955, p. 8. Al-Hawadith, criticized the government indirectly, by urging it to introduce economic, administrative, and social reforms, singling out the housing shortage and the high costs of living as problems which had to be addressed immediately, referred to in The Iraq Times, November 30, 1955, p. 8. Al-Zaman also urged the government to introduce internal reforms, since "there was no longer a legitimate excuse for not carrying them out," quoted in The Iraq Times, December 6, 1955, p. 8.

to two serious issues which the government must address and gives an unequivocal indication of how potentially explosive these problems might be by emphasizing that villages must have an equitable share in the national wealth.

Surprisingly enough, the press also reported in detail about violent demonstrations, though the account printed was that of the government. Again, however, the reader could form an opinion of what had taken place by reading between the lines.¹⁹⁸ Critical remarks were also printed with regard to the shortage of schools, a problem which Al-Zaman found “strange,” considering the fact that Iraq had “the money and capabilities” to eliminate it.¹⁹⁹ The newspaper emphasized that the problem needed to be addressed immediately.

The above brief examination of the Iraqi press suggests that anyone possessing some form of analytical skills was in a position to keep himself informed of public opinion in the country, even though the Iraqi press often needed to veil its reporting on the true state of affairs in the country. One can therefore conclude that a careful study of the Iraqi press on a daily basis would provide Western diplomats with sufficient material to arrive at

¹⁹⁸ The Iraq Times, November 22, 1956, pp. 1 and 15. According to the newspaper report, which was based on a government communiqué, communists and “a group of other subversive elements” had entered a secondary school and incited its students to strike, demonstrate, and attack the police. In the ensuing battle sixty policemen and nine civilians had been injured. Three things are remarkable about this account. First, it does not provide the name of the school where the incident took place. Second, six times as many policemen as civilians were injured. Third, nine “civilians” were injured. The reader knows that students, communists, and “other subversive elements” participated in the violent demonstration. The name of the school was possibly withheld from the public because it could have been a stronghold of leftist sympathizers and the police did most likely not want to spread this piece of information. The large number of injured policemen does not sound plausible, since they were most likely better prepared for a violent confrontation than the students of the secondary school. The figure was therefore probably used to mobilize sympathy for the police. The use of the term civilians is most likely a cover up for the more convincing possibility that students were injured. Had this circumstance been reported, however, it would have incited the population against the authorities. Furthermore, had communists been injured there would have been no need for the term civilian; their membership in a banned organization made them criminals anyway and it would consequently not have constituted a serious crime in the eyes of the authorities to beat up criminals.

¹⁹⁹ The Iraq Times, October 29, 1956, p. 8.

accurate conclusions regarding the intensity of the opposition to Nuri al-Sa'id's policies. Whether they actually drew such conclusions in their reports, however, is another matter.

British and American Intelligence on the Situation in Iraq

The present and the previous chapters have already established that the British as well as the Americans were well aware of the consequences of the iqta' system in the countryside, the situation in the sarifas, the opposition's criticism of official policies, and what opposition politicians considered to be problems that demanded immediate action by the government. Despite restrictions on what could be reported in the press some of this important information was available even to expatriates and diplomats who had no Arabic-language skills, since The Iraq Times offered its readers a daily roundup of the editorials of the Arabic-language press, including the opposition's criticism of government policies.²⁰⁰ To draw more solid conclusions about the interpretation of available intelligence, however, one has to analyze diplomatic correspondence in detail.

²⁰⁰ The Iraq Times itself did not voice criticism of government policies, but to go as far as saying that the newspaper was not interested in presenting political information to its readers, as Norman Daniel claims, appears to be an exaggeration, though one could argue that he is partly correct, since The Iraq Times itself appears not to have critically commented on the domestic policies of the Iraqi government. The newspapers which it quoted on a daily basis, however, did. He further claims that "[t]hey [the British in Iraq] had only one newspaper accessible to them in English; no paper was allowed to print the truth, but there was no sign that the Iraq Times even wanted to print political information...", Caractacus (Daniel), Revolution in Iraq, pp. 82-83. Daniel's claim that Iraqi newspapers were not allowed to print the truth is perhaps correct to a certain degree, but the examples discussed above constitute evidence that what they were supposed to do is not necessarily what they did. In a petition submitted to the prime minister opposition politicians claimed that newspapers were compelled to adhere to the official line only, during Nuri's most recent term in office, Emmett B. Ford, Second Secretary of Embassy (for the Ambassador), to the Department of State, Confidential, August 20, 1957, 787.00/8-2057. This chapter has argued above, however, that the reader who read between the lines could actually get a fairly good idea of the state of affairs in the country even during Nuri's authoritarian premiership. To call the dailies which were re-licensed for publication by Nuri responsible, as U.S. Ambassador Waldemar Gallman does (see footnote 193 above), implying that those which were not re-licensed were irresponsible, is probably an exaggeration in the other direction. The truth most likely lies somewhere between these two opinions of the Iraqi press.

The British ambassador to Iraq, Michael Wright, was aware of the problem Nuri's restrictions on civil liberties and political life constituted and that the opposition to the latter's policies gradually increased. The ambassador clearly realized that there was a direct link between the growing resentment of Nuri's policies on the one hand, and on the other, the fact that the elections in 1954 had been rigged and the perception among opposition politicians that landowners in the Parliament would successfully resist any attempt to introduce reforms, which would reduce their influence. Wright was also convinced that there was a direct connection between the opposition's ability "to cause trouble for the Government"²⁰¹ and the extent to which the population would benefit from the development program. His conclusion was therefore that "[i]t is in a measure a race against time if the political evolution of Iraq is to take place peacefully and an upheaval avoided."²⁰²

Despite the realization that time was a crucial factor, and that the negative impact on social stability would only increase if the benefits of the development program did not trickle down to peasants and workers, Wright still concluded that

[t]hough there are great inequalities of wealth, the gap between the very rich and the very poor is less glaringly obvious, and seems to produce less social tensions, than in some other Middle Eastern countries...There are...at present no real economic reasons for violent discontent which were a big contributing factor in touching off the troubles of 1948 and 1952. Nuri said to me the other day: 'Bread is more important than politics.' He now believes that if the present growth and prosperity can continue and spread more widely for another year or two, the whole fabric of national life will be immensely strengthened.²⁰³

The above quotation is evidence that Nuri believed that economic policies could be detached from the issue of civil liberties and foreign policy. Furthermore, Wright's

²⁰¹ Wright to Foreign Office, Confidential, January 11, 1956, FO371/121640.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Wright to E.M. Rose, Foreign Office, Secret, February 15, 1956, FO371/121641.

conclusion that the unequal distribution of wealth in the country did not constitute a serious problem shows that he had not visited the sarifas in Baghdad and had no personal experience of the situation in the rural areas of Iraq. Finally, Wright concurred with Nuri regarding the correlation between economic growth and social stability.

Despite the allegedly bright economic prospects, the British ambassador identified a number of factors which could cause future problems—the communists; the discontent of the intellectuals with the slow speed of social reform; and, anti-West Arab nationalism, allegedly encouraged by Egypt and Saudi Arabia. “There are many people who think that a show-down with some or all of these forces is inevitable, and might indeed come at almost any moment.”²⁰⁴ It appears that Wright placed so much confidence in Nuri’s ability to maintain stability that he underestimated the possibility of widespread social unrest and therefore did not anticipate any serious problems as long as the latter remained alive, though he mentioned, without further elaboration, the possibility of Nuri being removed by force.

The American Embassy in Baghdad was aware of the opposition’s strong condemnation of Nuri’s authoritarian policies and their demands expressed in a petition to Prime Minister ‘Ali Jawdat al-Ayyubi in 1957.²⁰⁵ An Embassy report written after the revolution stated the following:

We failed in our intelligence, but so did also the previous Iraqi Government.... We were quite aware of the criticism... coming from students, adult intelligentsia, professional groups, and liberal-minded politicians. We were also aware of criticism within army circles which, however, was limited almost exclusively to lower officer ranks. We... appreciated, too, [the] fact that basis for this criticism within [the] army and among civilians existed. [The] Feeling that Iraq has been dominated politically by [the] West has been widespread; ...the country’s wealth

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Emmett B. Ford, Second Secretary of Embassy (for the Ambassador), to the Department of State, Confidential, August 20, 1957, 787.00/8-2057.

is concentrated in a relatively small group and...little up to now has been done for [the] masses. But what we did not appreciate was [the] fact that one small group could have been so well organized as to pull off [a] coup in such classic, revolutionary style. I had been assured and reassured by such leaders as Nuri, General Rafiz [sic], and [Interior] Minister Qazzaz that [the] army was loyal...I feel, though, that if our Service Attaches could have penetrated in their personal contacts further down in officer ranks, it might have been helpful, while we probably, even so, would not have had forewarning of [the] coup of [the] younger officers who have suddenly come forward.²⁰⁶

American diplomats were thus well aware of the ills of Iraqi society, a fact which, however, did not alert them to the possibility of a revolution.

The above analysis reveals three problematic aspects of U.S. intelligence gathering in Iraq in the years preceding the Revolution. These weaknesses were: (a) the taking at face value of assurances given by government officials; (b) the lack of contacts with ordinary citizens and junior officials; and (c) the lack of reflection on and analysis of possible consequences of the state of affairs in the country. It is obvious that at least some diplomats in the Embassy were fooled by the over-confidence of senior Iraqi government officials despite the information available from interviews with reformist officials such as the Mutasarrif of Kut Liwa',²⁰⁷ and mistook this over-confidence for social and political stability. Gallman's conclusion that the Embassy would not have had any forewarning of the coup even if embassy officials had made contact with junior army officers is, however, indubitably a correct assessment, since the army officers involved in the conspiracy for obvious reasons did not divulge their plans to representatives of Western powers. The discussion of the nature of the information available to both the British and the Americans has thus provided sufficient grounds to conclude that they were in possession of information which reflected the true situation in the country, but drew

²⁰⁶ Gallman to the Secretary of State, August 4, 1958, 787.00/8-458.

²⁰⁷ See pages 74-75 above.

conclusions from available intelligence which did not give serious consideration to the possibility of a military coup or widespread social unrest. The reason for this was that they took the regime's over-confidence at face value and placed too much trust in the development program.

It can only be speculated whether other Western analysts than those on the spot would have drawn conclusions which reflected more urgency. Some Iraqi journalists, on the other hand, as implied by the above quotes from the Iraqi press, clearly wished to convey to the Iraqi public a picture of the serious conditions in their country, and their great concern about the possible consequences of not addressing social, political, and economic problems expeditiously.

British Leverage with the Regime

A question in need of attention is whether British influence in Iraq would have allowed Britain to act differently had she decided to do so. A common perception among ordinary Iraqis was that Britain was deeply involved in high-level decision-making.²⁰⁸ This interpretation of British influence was based on Britain's two occupations of the country and her role as a mandatory power until 1932. Foreign Office documents indicate that British leverage with the Iraqi regime during the occupation in the early 1940s differed greatly from Britain's influence in the country in the mid-1950s. In 1943 the British ambassador had directly attacked Prime Minister Nuri for his failure to address economic problems, for his tolerance of dishonesty in public services, and corruption of the police. The ambassador also criticized the fact that the army could not be relied upon,

²⁰⁸ Caractacus, Revolution in Iraq, pp. 57, 60.

the treatment of the Kurds, “the shameless land grabbing carried on by prominent personalities...and the wide gulf between [the] government and the people.”²⁰⁹ The fact that Iraq of 1943 was under British occupation is reflected in the ambassador’s humiliating treatment of the Prime Minister.

By the mid-1950s British influence in Iraq was exercised in a much more subtle manner, namely by suggesting improvements and courses of action rather than demanding them as earlier. Apparently the issues that concerned the British now were more or less the same as in the early 1940s, which suggests that they were able to put forward their demands quite bluntly, but that Iraqi leaders ignored British “advice” or simply were not in a position to introduce reforms for political reasons, that is, they did not want to upset their power base. The British were, however, persistent in their attempts to persuade Nuri to heed good advice. By the end of May of 1955 Lord Salter had completed his Report on the Development of Iraq, which prompted Ambassador Wright to suggest that a committee, including members of the opposition, be appointed “to study the Report and make recommendations before October.”²¹⁰ Wright also informed King Faisal of his proposal and made clear to Harold Macmillan that he intended to “maintain the momentum of the suggestion.”²¹¹ Furthermore, immediately after his arrival in Baghdad the Ambassador had worked hard to secure an expedient confirmation of Michael Ionides as the British member on the Development Board in order “to promote wiser direction of activity on the part of the Development Board.”²¹²

²⁰⁹ Great Britain, FO E 7266/489/93, November 6, 1943, quoted in Haj, The Making of Iraq 1900-1963, p. 181.

²¹⁰ Wright to Harold Macmillan, Foreign Office, Confidential, June 15, 1955, FO371/115748.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid. Ionides in turn was trying to make sure that administrative reforms were introduced, that the housing program was accelerated, and that the Board focused more on short-term programs for individual

Wright's efforts underscore a number of important facts. First, they show that the British did not hesitate to press for what they believed was important in their dealings with Iraqi governments. Second, suggesting a deadline for the forming of a committee was quite a bold move, since it could have been interpreted as a blatant attempt to exercise pressure on Nuri. Third, the British deemed it important that Nuri reach out to the opposition. Fourth, the Embassy did not hesitate to support British citizens in key advisory positions. Fifth, the British were apparently sincere in their efforts to bring about certain reforms in Iraq, since the Ambassador was prepared to maintain pressure on the Iraqi government to achieve this objective. Sixth, British diplomats realized that more attention must be devoted to smaller local projects in order to enable ordinary Iraqis to reap tangible benefits from investment of the oil revenues.

The question of promoting the political careers of the "right" Iraqis was high on the Foreign Office's agenda for Iraq. Furthermore, policymakers in the ministry were also concerned with the issue of who might succeed Nuri when he resigned or if something unforeseen happened to him. Wright assessed that "[i]t [was] not impossible that in such an eventuality we might be able to exert discreet influence on the King and Crown Prince in their choice of Prime Minister and on the latter in his selection of candidates for key posts."²¹³ This suggests that the British had retained considerable influence over Iraqi politics, or at the very least believed that they did. The quotation further reveals that the British did not hesitate to exercise such influence when this would be of benefit to their

liwa's. For a detailed discussion of Ionides's views and the activities of the Development Board, see Chapter 1. When Ionides published his Divide and Lose: The Arab Revolt of 1955-1958 he had over thirty years of experience in the Middle East as an irrigation engineer and development official. His analysis is highly critical of Zionism and British policies towards the Middle East in general and Iraq in particular. Ionides left Iraq a few months before the revolution. Exerpts from his private correspondence during his time in Iraq reveal that his conclusions frequently appeared to be prescient.

²¹³ Wright to E.M. Rose, Foreign Office, Secret, February 15, 1956, FO371/121641.

interests. A number of candidates were considered, including a “soldier...if the situation became sufficiently tense.”²¹⁴ In February 1956 the Foreign Office requested that Wright suggest “what we can do to help to see that the right people are coming along in Iraq,” to which the Ambassador replied that he maintained contact with Salih Jabr, the former prime minister who had had to resign in January of 1948 owing to opposition to the Portsmouth Treaty which he had signed. In 1956 Jabr was a critic of Nuri’s policies.²¹⁵ Wright reported, however, that Nuri did not appreciate these contacts. From this reaction it can be concluded that the issue of grooming an heir was not foremost on Nuri’s mind and that he did not plan to retire any time soon. The British objective was obviously to make Nuri’s government more representative while he was in office, and to secure the cooperation of a capable successor who would pursue pro-British policies after Nuri had left the political stage.

Like Nuri, the British were concerned about Egyptian propaganda and wanted to prove it wrong. The latter claimed that “the Iraqi regime [was] unrepresentative and reactionary.”²¹⁶ If this could be refuted Iraq’s, and Britain’s, standing in the Arab world would certainly be strengthened. In June of 1956, however, the Levant Department of the Foreign Office seemed to advocate a less conspicuous role in exercising influence in Iraq when it stated that “[w]e do not wish to give Nuri any specific advice; but in general we think he would be well advised to make his Government as broadly based as possible.”²¹⁷ It is possible that the reason for this wish to keep a lower profile in Iraq was the growing

²¹⁴ Wright to E.M. Rose, Foreign Office, Secret, February 15, 1956, FO371/121641. The British were thus prepared to accept a military strongman, such as the Chief of the General Staff General Rafiq ‘Arif, if this was the only way to retain their influence in Iraq.

²¹⁵ Wright to E.M. Rose, the Foreign Office, Secret, February 15, 1956, FO371/121641.

²¹⁶ Levant Dept to Secretary of State, the Foreign Office, Secret, June 23, 1956, FO371/121643.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

tension between Britain and Egypt over the Suez Canal, which was nationalized in July of 1956. With their hands full in Egypt the British would certainly wish to avoid upsetting nationalists in Iraq as well. A year and a half later, however, Wright informs Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd that he will do what he can to persuade the new government to address the serious problems discussed in a report by the Embassy's Oriental Counselor Sam Falle.²¹⁸ Wright this time around hopes that "by manifesting interest and sympathy...it may be possible to put at least some of the points across without appearing patronizing or unkindly critical."²¹⁹ One year after the Suez debacle the British Ambassador obviously believes that Britain has retained sufficient leverage with the Iraqi government to be able to press for necessary reform, albeit in a cautious manner.

One source, the Chief of the Royal Palace, 'Abd Allah Bakr, reports that Ambassador Wright had seen him a month before the Revolution and had emphasized the need for social and economic reform, and for reducing the influence of tribal shaikhs. Bakr had replied that the shaikhs were the foundation upon which the monarchy rested, to which Wright replied that "if reforms were not carried out, there would no longer be a monarchy or tribal shaykhs."²²⁰

²¹⁸ See footnote 178.

²¹⁹ Wright to Selwyn Lloyd, the Foreign Office, Confidential, December 31, 1957, FO371/134197.

²²⁰ Khadduri, Republican Iraq, pp. 36-37. Wright's comment suggests that he allowed himself to be more blunt when meeting with officials than with the highest leaders of the regime. Thus, there is an element of urgency to Wright's alleged comment that appears not to have been present in previous similar conversations with Nuri, Faisal, or 'Abd al-Ilah. Two weeks later Oriental Counselor Sam Falle had conveyed a similar message to Bakr, Falle also seems to have suggested in a memorandum to Wright that Nuri be replaced and the Crown Prince be appointed ambassador to the United States. Khadduri emphasizes, however, that no ambassador would have exercised such pressure on Nuri and 'Abd al-Ilah unless explicitly instructed to do so by his government. The alleged proposals were "communicated" (it is unclear by whom) to the Crown Prince, but they were ignored, Khadduri, Republican Iraq, pp. 36-37. Khadduri's account suggests that the British Embassy made what could be termed a last-ditch effort on the eve of the Revolution to avert "disaster" by impressing on the Iraqi regime the urgency of reform. Incredibly enough, Falle's recommendations were allegedly somehow communicated to the Crown Prince in what must have been interpreted by the latter as the ultimate breach of diplomatic protocol. Wright, Falle, and the Foreign Office could not possibly have expected that 'Abd al-Ilah would heed their insulting

In summary, the evidence presented in this part of the chapter suggests that British influence over Iraqi domestic policies only went so far, that the British themselves exaggerated their ability to exercise influence in Iraq, and that the perception of the Iraqi public that the British were more or less running the country was exaggerated.

Could the July 14 Revolution Have Been Averted?

In order to answer the question of whether the Revolution could have been averted one has, of necessity, to engage in counterfactual argumentation. This argumentation, however, will be exclusively based on the facts and conclusions offered under the above subheads of this chapter. A useful point of departure is an article published in The Times in February of 1955, which eloquently illustrates Nuri's record since he returned to power the previous year: "Since Nuri Sa'id returned to office all political parties have been dissolved, including his own...a new press ordinance has reduced the number of newspapers...The colleges and schools have been purged...The dismissed teachers and students, and also the civil servants dismissed...have been made liable under an

advice, so the question is: Why would they engage in such a futile endeavor? Khadduri has not seen the document in question, but states that "Falle seems to have submitted a memorandum," Khadduri, Republican Iraq, p. 36. This leaves the possibility open that no such memorandum was submitted to Wright by Falle, or if it was, that its content was not communicated to the Crown Prince. If Khadduri's assumption is correct, the Embassy must have acted under instructions of the Foreign Office, as Khadduri himself points out. But why would London take such a step? This chapter has argued that Britain was not privy to the Free Officers' coup plans, and one can therefore dismiss that this possibility would have prompted the British to act. Besides, nothing in Khadduri's account supports that the British had any advance knowledge of the coup, since this would have been conveyed to Nuri and the Crown Prince in the form of an explicit warning. Is the rumor about the memorandum and the communicating of its content to 'Abd al-Ilah possibly an attempt by the British to wash their hands of responsibility for the coup? Foreign Office documents referred to in this chapter indicate that the British had made certain efforts to persuade Nuri to introduce reforms. Therefore, Britain could have referred to such documents arguing that she had made earnest although insufficient efforts to avert disaster in Iraq. However, the claim that the Embassy communicated Falle's recommendations to the Crown Prince is not convincing for two reasons: (a) the recommendations would have been interpreted by the Crown Prince as highly insulting; and (b) the diplomatic documents referred to above do not support the assumption that the British were prepared to exercise pressure on the regime in such a blunt manner.

amendment to the army law for nine months' military service.”²²¹ Like the discussion above, the Times article makes it abundantly clear that Nuri alienated large portions of Iraqi society—politicians, journalists, students, teachers and civil servants, in addition to peasants, farm laborers, workers, unemployed, and sarifa dwellers as indicated throughout this chapter. The remaining tiny section of Iraqis who uncritically supported him were those who benefited from his policies and would lose their privileged position and influence if policies changed, that is the shaikhs, the oligarchs, and the royal family. This minimal power base alone would be sufficient to allow one to argue that the majority would sooner or later demand their rightful share in the social and political destiny of the country.

It does not, however, necessarily follow from the fact that Nuri caused a sharp polarization of Iraqi society that the revolution was inevitable, the reason of course being that the main protagonists—the majority of the Iraqi people, Nuri al-Sa‘id, the British, and the Americans—simultaneously constituted, to a lesser or greater degree, variable and constant forces. This chapter has shown that the first actor was variable to a lesser degree, since the opposition constituted a more or less reactive and frequently united force in its struggle with the regime, and would most likely not reduce its resistance to it unless Nuri al-Sa‘id and Crown Prince ‘Abd al-Ilah were removed from power. It has also been shown that Nuri with his long record of authoritarian rule and strong convictions about what policies were in the best interest of Iraq was even less likely to change his policies to accommodate the opposition, to which attest his frequent use of

²²¹ The Times, February 23, 1955.

force and imposition of various restrictions on civil liberties in order to suppress public manifestations of dissent.

Of the four actors the two Western powers had a somewhat greater potential to constitute variable forces. This argument is based on the fact that both the British and American diplomats reported truthfully on the social and political ills of Iraqi society, though they underestimated the acute danger posed by these problems. Furthermore, the British Ambassador was convinced that the British had retained the power to exercise influence over Iraqi policies even to the extent where they believed they could secure the appointment of a prime minister who would pursue pro-British policies. It is unclear whether Britain really was in a position to exercise such considerable influence over Iraqi politics or whether the British were just being over-confident in their own power, but this question pales, with regard to importance, in comparison with another question: What would have been the consequences of such an action by Britain?

In stating that they could influence the appointment of a prime minister and his government, some British diplomats evinced a surprising lack of understanding of the political realities, which they analyzed and reported to the Foreign Office. They appear to have been completely oblivious to the dangers of such a course of action, the obvious results of which were already there to see for everyone. Nuri al-Sa'id was "Britain's man" and every Iraqi who took some interest in politics must have been aware of this fact, one of the main reasons why Nuri was so hated. For a second to imagine that the Iraqi intelligentsia would not quickly find out whether a prime minister was "Britain's man" and would not take exception to such interference in Iraqi domestic affairs, comes across as daydreaming at best, and possibly as serious negligence of duty. One can

therefore conclude that some British diplomats, despite their sincere wish to press for certain reforms in Iraq, were still prepared to follow a course which would to a certain extent perpetuate the problems the Iraqi regime was facing. Their obvious refusal to accept the conclusion that they were part of these problems indicates that whatever measures they would take to ameliorate the situation would only go so far. From this it can be concluded that it was impossible for the British to avert the revolution, since they did not wish to give up their strong position in Iraq, including their ability to exercise influence over Iraqi politics. Even if this influence was limited, it was not perceived by the Iraqi public as being limited, and was therefore seriously damaging to any government which maintained close ties with Britain.

The United States played a secondary role to Britain in Iraq.²²² As a result, Washington had even less means to effectuate change in that country. Ambassador Gallman's relations with Nuri were friendly, but U.S. political leverage with the regime was considerably less than Britain's. The United States could, however, had it chosen to do so, have exercised some influence over Iraqi policies thanks to its position as supplier of military equipment to Iraq.²²³ Had American influence in Iraq been greater and had the United States decided to exercise it, it is possible that a less authoritarian prime minister than Nuri, such as Fadhil al-Jamali, could have been appointed. The problem of Crown Prince 'Abd al-Ilah would, however, have remained. Whenever he believed that the power of the Court was in danger or "chaos" threatened due to restoration of civil liberties, he would call in Nuri al-Sa'id to rectify the situation. It is doubtful whether the United States in such an event would have insisted on true democratization of the

²²² Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri, p., 223.

²²³ For a discussion of U.S.-Iraqi military relations see Chapter 2 and Chapter 10.

political system.²²⁴ The reason is that ‘Abd al-Ilah and Nuri were known quantities and that no one really knew what would come in their stead, possibly a leftist national front or a radically nationalist government. This would of course have been a highly undesirable outcome for both the British and the Americans, since an Iraq under a pronouncedly nationalist or leftist government could opt to follow a Nasserist nonaligned foreign policy. In the context of the intense Cold War of the 1950s this would have constituted an extremely dangerous development in the eyes of the Western powers, which is why it was an additional reason for both powers not to exert too much pressure on Nuri and the Court to introduce political, economic, and social reforms.

The discussion in this chapter of Nuri’s domestic policies suggests that his focus was not on reform but on maintaining and making more efficient an existing authoritarian system. Due to his strong urge to exercise control over all aspects of government, to suppress any public manifestation of opposition to his rule, and due to his disinclination to change his policies despite the widespread discontent they gave rise to in the country, Nuri could be expected to remain a predictable actor on the Iraqi political stage. He argued that the ambitious projects in the development program financed by the oil revenues would, within a couple of years, improve the economic situation of the poor so much that the risk of violent social unrest would disappear. Nuri’s approach might have worked temporarily for the poorer classes, but his almost exclusive focus on economic means to maintain stability, when he was not engaged in foreign policymaking, which he considered a more important activity, ignored his lack of support among the

²²⁴ The following comment of Gallman on Nuri made in December of 1958 suggests that democratization in Iraq was not a top priority to the Americans: “From my personal experience and observation covering these past four years in Iraq, I would say that with the death of Nuri, illiberal as he was at times in dealing with domestic issues, Iraq lost her best leader toward an eventual life of dignity and decency, and her strongest bulwark against recurrent chaos, if not savagery,” Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri, p. 230.

intelligentsia. The latter would simply not have accepted a continued situation which excluded them from political influence due to their opposition to Nuri.²²⁵ His record as prime minister convincingly supports the argumentation in this paragraph and it can therefore with a high degree of certainty be concluded that Nuri was not in a position to avert the revolution. The simple reason is that he was convinced that his policies excluded the possibility of a revolution. According to this rationale he could disregard all opposition, since yielding to its demands would lead to “chaos,” of which Nuri must have believed he had ample evidence from post-World War II Iraqi politics.

Up to now arguments and conclusions have been offered that all suggest that the Iraqi Revolution could not have been averted save by a fundamental but highly unlikely change of character and political convictions of the four protagonists referred to above. There is, however, one argument which points in the opposite direction, contending that the revolution could have been at least delayed. The grave concern of the Free Officers organization, which eventually overthrew the regime, about foreign intervention in the event of a coup gives the historian a clue. It can therefore be concluded that a strong Western military presence in the Middle East would have been the only factor that could have delayed the July 14 coup. The coup leader Brigadier ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim’s reply to a journalist’s question whether he would have carried out the coup had U.S. forces been sent to Lebanon earlier is remarkable.²²⁶ His answer was “no.” Qasim himself thus

²²⁵ William Polk stated in 1959: “It seems to me that almost no matter how good the Iraqi Government was in economic terms—the disparity between its economic growth and political stagnation was such as to make a blow-up of some sort inevitable,” William Polk, “Report On Iraq,” in Middle East Report, 1959 (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, edited by William Sands), p. 13.

²²⁶ U.S. Marines landed in Lebanon within 48 hours of the July 14 coup.

supports the argument that a strong U.S. or British military presence in the Middle East would have compelled the Free Officers to postpone their coup.²²⁷

A final question which remains to be addressed is the following: If Nuri exercised almost total control over Iraq, why is it that a revolution could erupt? He had an effective network of agents providing him with information on any ongoing subversive or opposition activities in Iraq. He also saw to it that the army officers were well paid, a fact which convinced him that they would remain loyal to the regime. With the benefit of hindsight, this was obviously a serious misperception, which Nuri could not afford to have. An even greater mistake was to dismiss warnings and intelligence that the state of affairs in the army was not as peaceful as he believed. Nuri had received intelligence on Qasim's suspicious conduct, but had accepted the latter's protestations of loyalty and failed to act. Qasim was regarded as Nuri's protégé which might explain why the Prime Minister took the matter so lightly. The chief of the general staff, General Rafiq 'Arif had received similar information regarding 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif (no relation), Qasim's co-conspirator, and had dismissed the suspicions equally lightly, since 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif was his protégé.²²⁸ A plausible explanation for Nuri's reaction is that he was over-confident. His survival record in the face of uprisings and strong political opposition to his leadership must have led him to believe that no one could touch him, not even the sole force which had the means to do so—the army.²²⁹ How dangerous this tendency to underestimate his enemies was became clear on July 14, 1958.

²²⁷ Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri, p. 210.

²²⁸ Khadduri, Republican Iraq, p. 32.

²²⁹ During a conversation with Nuri Ambassador Wright had expressed to the former that he had the impression that some of the younger officers in the Iraqi army "had pro-Nasser sympathies" and wondered whether there was any reason for concern. Nuri had replied that there was not. "Some of them might talk in this way" but he was not worried. Wright had also inquired about "officers of the tank unit near Baghdad"

It is reported that Nuri, when asked by Arab and foreign journalists about the popular discontent with his rule and the possibility of a violent eruption, would laugh out in over-confidence and reply that “the discontented were just a handful of chattering politicians” and that “the Iraqi government had taken necessary steps to prevent them from...causing harm to anyone.”²³⁰ Nuri would also refer to the loyalty of the army, Faisal’s confidence in him, that he was in firm control of the police, and that he enjoyed the support of the majority of the Chamber of deputies. The perception of Nuri as an over-confident man is also reflected in the various stories about him which circulated after his death. He is alleged to have emphasized “that the man who could kill him had not yet been born.”²³¹ Nuri’s dismissal of the opposition as a few hundred dissatisfied students²³² further attests to his tendency to underestimate the strength of his political adversaries. It is surprising that such an astute and security-aware politician as Nuri would have completely ignored the lessons to be learned from the violent unrest and uprisings in recent Iraqi history. He most likely interpreted the fact that they had been suppressed as a testimony to the incompetence of the opposition and as a confirmation of his own infallibility with respect to matters political.

but Nuri had not expressed any concern about them, Wright to the Foreign Office, Top Secret, September 1, 1956, FO371/121646.

²³⁰ Al-Basam, Mudhakkarat Wa Asrar Hurub Nuri al-Sa'id, p. 171. Caractacus (Norman Daniel), Revolution in Iraq, p. 43.

²³¹ Caractacus (Daniel), Revolution in Iraq, p. 133.

²³² Ibid., p. 118. Khadduri claims that Nuri was aware of the opposition among young officers to his policies towards the Arab world and the West, but that he ignored it, Khadduri, Republican Iraq, p. 77.

INDEPENDENT IRAQ AND NURI AL-SA'ID—FOREIGN POLICY

Nuri al-Sa'id's foreign policy was as controversial, if not more so, in Iraq as his domestic policy. The main reason for this was Iraq's close ties with Britain, a fact which fanned revolutionary sentiments in Iraq. As argued in Chapter 3, however, the public perception that Britain was deeply involved in high-level Iraqi domestic policymaking was exaggerated. This chapter will examine whether there was ground for the same suspicion in respect to Iraq's relations with the Arab World. The answer to this question will be found by analyzing Nuri's vision for the Middle East and Iraq's role in the area, as well as his actual policies towards the region. Furthermore, this chapter will also briefly address the following questions: To what extent was Nuri pragmatic about realizing his vision? What was the reason for the tension in Iraqi-Egyptian relations? Did Nuri have to exploit certain issues in order to be able to divert attention from more controversial issues? To what extent did Nuri's foreign policy isolate Iraq? In addressing these questions this chapter will initially discuss Nuri's foreign policy vision in general and then proceed to analyze in what fashion he implemented his plans and how his initiatives affected Iraq's relations with Syria, Israel, and Egypt.

Nuri's Vision

Foreign policy was Nuri's preferred area of activity. His international background and activities during his formative years and as an officer in the Arab Revolt, as discussed in Chapter II, go a long way to explain his continued interest in international affairs in his

political career. Nuri grew up in the Ottoman Empire and was a product of its educational institutions. One result of this experience was his inclination to think in regional and strategic, rather than strictly national, terms. Since the Ottoman Empire had comprised most of the Middle East, it was natural for Nuri to take the whole region into consideration when formulating policies, even after the Empire was long gone. Another factor which stimulated such an outlook was the sense, which he shared with other Arabs, of being part of a larger Arab umma, or nation. Despite considerable regional differences in the Arab world, this term carries powerful connotations of homogeneity and unity, although not always existent in reality, and is therefore frequently exploited for various political purposes in Arab politics.

The Middle East of the mid-1950s was a very diverse region in terms of population, economy, and political system. Nuri often found himself at loggerheads with socialist and radical nationalist leaders in Egypt and Syria, but relations with Saudi Arabia also fluctuated due to historical rivalries creating tensions between the ruling houses in Baghdad, Amman, and Riyadh. The lingering imperialist presence in the Middle East of European powers and Western support for the state of Israel were complicating and embarrassing factors for Arab governments which maintained close ties with Western powers. Finally, increasing Soviet influence in the Middle East constituted an alarming development in the eyes of conservative Arab regimes. It is against this background that Nuri's foreign policy needs to be analyzed.

Nuri's vision for the Middle East was based on three principles: First, the best way to achieve true independence for Arab countries was through close cooperation with Britain.

Second, Iraq must play a leading role in the Arab World.²³³ Third, the means to achieve leadership in the Arab world was the Fertile Crescent project, a federation primarily with Syria and Jordan, but open to accession by other Arab countries. Nuri had set before himself the task of implementing this ambitious program, and did not hesitate to go to great lengths to achieve his goal. The initial focus in this chapter will be on Syria, an example of how far Nuri was prepared to go to realize his dream. Next, Nuri's pragmatic approach to Israel and the Palestinian issue will be analyzed. Finally, the reader's attention will be drawn to Nuri's confrontational relationship with Egyptian President Gamal 'Abdul Nasser.

Iraqi-Syrian Relations

Iraq's relations with Syria were extremely complicated, even more so than those with Egypt. This part of the chapter discusses the reasons for this fact and also addresses the question of why the Syrian issue played such a prominent role in Iraqi foreign policy in the 1950s. There were several reasons for this. First, Syria was part of Nuri's strategic scheme to create a greater Arab union or federation, the Fertile Crescent, with Syria and Jordan. Second, Iraq's first king, Faisal I, had, before the British made him king of Iraq, aspired to become king of Syria. There was thus an emotional link between the Hashimites and Syria which went back to the pre-Mandate era.²³⁴ This part of the chapter,

²³³ Salih al-Basam, Mudhakkirat wa Asrar hurub Nuri al-Sa'id [Reminiscences and Secrets of Nuri al-Sa'id's Flight] (Bairut: Arab Diffusion Company, 2003, pp. 164 and 167.

²³⁴ In the 1950s there was also a link to 'Abd al-Ilah, who was aspiring to ascend the not yet existing throne of Syria. One of the reasons for his Syrian project was that he would be replaced as crown prince when an heir to the king of Iraq was born. Prime Minister Fadhil al-Jamali became the willing instrument for this scheme, Phebe Marr, The Modern History of Iraq (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), pp. 113-114. Also, see Al-Zaman, August 17, 1958, p. 1. The Iraq Times reported that former Minister to Syria 'Abd al-Jalil al-Rawi during an interrogation conducted by the investigating committee at the Ministry of Defense had stated that "Abdul Ilah was continually making efforts to establish unity with Syria in order to be

however, focuses primarily on the reasons of more recent date for the Iraqi regime's interest in Syria's political leadership. It examines the extent of Iraqi influence over political life in Syria, and the methods used to further Iraqi interests in that country. Finally, British and American reactions to Iraqi policies towards Syria will be discussed and the question of whether differences existed between the two Western powers with regard to these policies will also be addressed.

Nuri al-Sa'id viewed with alarm Nasser's efforts to gain influence in Syria and the growing leftist trend in Syrian politics. Cairo and Baghdad both regarded control of or close ties with Syria as key to regional hegemony and the ability to isolate the rival for leadership in the Arab world.²³⁵ As a result, the Nasser-Nuri rivalry turned Syria into a battleground for an Egyptian-Iraqi propaganda war and struggle for influence in the country. A report by the American air attaché in Baghdad dated April 1955 testifies to Nuri's great concern. According to the attaché, what appears to have amounted to an ultimatum to the effect that the proposed Egyptian-Syrian-Saudi defense pact must be signed or the government would face a coup d'état was presented to Syrian President al-Atasi by the Syrian prime minister, foreign minister, chief of staff, and a delegation of Leftist army officers. Al-Atasi had requested that Iraq send in troops in the event of a coup. The Iraqi government had indicated that it would do so, and had asked for British and American views on a possible Iraqi military intervention. London and Washington

enthroned as King of Syria. I heard that Nuri was opposing this until 1956," The Iraq Times, August 16, 1958, p. 2.

²³⁵ Muhsin Muhammad al-Mutawalli al-'Arabi, Nuri Basha al-Sa'id: Min al-Bidaya ila al-Nihaya (Bairut: Al-Dar al-'Arabiyya li al-Mawsu'at, 2005), p. 334. In his rivalry with Nasser, Nuri went as far as suggesting at a Baghdad Pact meeting that oil revenues be withheld from Saudi Arabia by the United States for a period of six months to disrupt Saudi funding of "'anti-Western' and 'anti-Iraqi' forces in Egypt and Syria," FO 800/678, Macmillan-Nuri Sa'id meeting, 20 November 1955; FO 371/ 115532/V1073/1342, Hooper to Rose, 24 November 1955, quoted in W. Scott Lucas, Divided We Stand: Britain, the U.S. and the Suez Crisis (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), p. 79.

had discouraged Nuri from taking such action arguing that it would only result in increased regional tension.²³⁶ The report suggests that both Western powers opposed military intervention in Syria, but it is silent on U.S. and British views on a covert operation, which was likely their preferred course of action.²³⁷

Two methods among others which Iraq had applied to influence Syrian politics were money and propaganda. This had been the case when President Adib al-Shishakli had been overthrown in February 1954. He had been toppled by Syrian army officers, but it is clear that Iraqi Prime Minister Fadhil al-Jamali had pursued policies aiming at such

²³⁶ U.S. Air Attaché, Baghdad to the Department of the Air Force, Secret, Priority, April 16, 1955, 787.00(W)/4-1655. The American air attaché also points out that the failure of the Iraqis to inform the Turkish government of their intentions could cause a strain in the Iraqi-Turkish alliance. Most likely Nuri did not want the Turks to get involved in internal Arab affairs for the same reason that he did not want Israel to participate in a British-French military operation against Egypt in 1956. Iraqi cooperation with a non-Arab country in intervening in the internal affairs of an Arab state would not sit well with Arab public opinion and would certainly further weaken Nuri's standing at home as well as in the Arab world. Another reason not to approach the Turks at such an early stage in the planning for a military operation is that Nuri might have suspected that at least the Americans would object to his project. In any case he obviously wished to solicit Western support for his plan before informing the Turks. On the other hand, transcripts from Major General Ghazi al-Daghistani's trial suggest that both Turkey and Israel would have participated in a future operation against Syria. Al-Daghistani himself, however, had categorically denied the accusation of conspiring with Turkey and Israel to overthrow the Syrian government. According to documents which had been seized from al-Daghistani's safe, referred to by the president of the Supreme Special Military Court, Colonel Fadhil 'Abbas al-Mahdawi, an agreement had existed between the United States and Britain to encourage Israel to adopt a threatening posture towards Jordan in order to take this as a pretext for massing Iraqi troops in the latter country. Iraq would then have supplied arms and ammunition to border tribes, provided aid to exiled Syrian conspirators to incite them to participate in armed clashes with Syrian forces in order to create a tense situation in border areas, and compelled the Syrian army to attack Iraqi forces. This would have allowed the latter to defend themselves and be drawn into a war with Syria. Al-Zaman, August 17, 1958, p. 1. During the trial al-Daghistani stated that the role of Britain and the United States in the plan for Syrian regime change was "to forestall Israeli, French, or Turkish intervention in Syria in the event of a pro-Iraqi coup," but they had also provided arms and money to the project, Patrick Seale, The Struggle For Syria, p. 273; The Iraq Times, August 26, 1958, p. 2. Furthermore, the plan had also provided for British-American intervention "on Iraq's side in the event that the Soviet Union sent volunteers to help sister Syria," The Iraq Times, August 29, 1958, p. 2.

²³⁷ In October 1955 a Foreign Office official had proposed a plan to be coordinated with the United States for Iraqi activities in Syria: "(a) bribery within Syria, by or on behalf of Iraq. The Syrian Army should be the main target; (b) the rapid build-up of the Iraqi forces; (c) propaganda in Syria in favor of Iraq, designed especially to bring home to Syrians the economic advantages to be derived from friendship with the Iraqis; (d) ...efforts to subordinate the Syrian economy to Iraq's, e.g., by an Iraqi loan to Syria; (e) measures, overt and covert, to counter Saudi influence in Syria; (f) propaganda designed to bring home to the Iraqi public the importance to them of a stable and friendly Syria," FO 371/115954/VY10393/7G, Arthur minute, October 10, 1955, quoted in Lucas, Divided We Stand, pp. 114-115.

action, and leading to pro-Iraqi politicians assuming power in Syria.²³⁸ One of these politicians was Sabri al-‘Asali, whose conservative cabinet had been sworn in after al-Shishakli’s overthrow. Having come under attack from the Ba‘thists and communists, al-‘Asali had turned to the Iraqi government for support. Fadhil al-Jamali had been dispatched twice to Damascus for talks with the new Syrian government only to discover that the Syrians were not particularly interested in union with Iraq. Their primary objective was to persuade the Iraqis to make a commitment to intervene militarily should the radicals attempt to topple al-‘Asali’s conservative government. As a condition for any commitment, however, al-Jamali had persuaded al-‘Asali to accept an Iraqi-Syrian federation with Faisal II as its head.²³⁹ Al-Jamali’s condition for a military commitment

²³⁸ Marr, The Modern History of Iraq, p. 114. The flow of Iraqi financial aid to the Syrian opposition had continued in subsequent years. Al-Zaman reported on August 17, 1958 that Deputy Chief of Staff Ghazi al-Daghistani had allocated ID10,000 to former Syrian President Adib al-Shishakli. The former was also accused of giving ID20,000 to the Iraqi military attaché in Beirut to be distributed among Syrian conspirators when requested, to meet their expenses, Al-Zaman, August 17, 1958, p. 1; The Iraq Times, August 26, 1958, p. 2. The following day the paper reported that Director of Military Intelligence, Staff Colonel (ret.) Ahmad Mar‘i had testified at al-Daghistani’s trial that Lieutenant Colonel Salih Mahdi, Iraqi military attaché in Damascus, had received from the Iraqi Foreign Ministry ID100,000 in the summer of 1956, Al-Zaman, August 18, 1958, p. 3; The Iraq Times reported on August 26 that the military attaché had received ID95,000, The Iraq Times, August 26, 1958, p. 2.

²³⁹ Mahkama, 3:969-970, 1127-1128, and 3:970, quoted in Malik Mufti, Sovereign Creations, p. 69. According to a British Embassy report sent from the British Embassy in Damascus on May 14, 1954, al-‘Asali had explained to the British ambassador that Egyptian activists had been disseminating propaganda in Syrian military circles proposing two reasons for not entering a union or reaching an understanding with Iraq. First, the influence of the Syrian army would be greatly reduced in the event of a merger of the Iraqi and Syrian armies. Second, the British would impose on Syria the Anglo-Iraqi Agreement of 1954. As a result, many Syrian military leaders had lent their support to the Ba‘th Party which opposed any understanding with the West or Iraq, British Documents publicized in The Middle East, February 11, 1985, quoted in al-‘Arabi, Nuri Basha, p. 339. Malcolm Kerr emphasizes the resistance among the Syrian younger educated generation to closer ties with Iraq, since this would entail a closer relationship with Britain, a power with a recent imperialist past in the Middle East. Syrian intellectuals had also doubted that a union with Iraq would be open to accession by Egypt, since Nuri was not in a position to control Nasser. Furthermore, Kerr argues that Nasser’s objectives in Syria—to keep Syria from entering into too close a relationship with Iraq—were more modest than those of Nuri, which partly explains the former’s success, since his goal was easier to attain than a full union, which was Nuri’s primary objective, Kerr, The Arab Cold War, p. 3. The concerns with regard to closer ties with Iraq had been voiced by Syrian nationalists during talks with an Iraqi delegation as early as 1949 when the former had stated that Iraq needed to “terminate her treaty with Britain before a union between the two countries could be discussed,” The Iraq Times, August 22, 1958, p. 3.

suggests that other methods than money and propaganda were used as well to influence Syrian politicians.

This Iraqi success was not of long duration, however, since Shukri al-Quwatli, a presidential candidate supported by Saudi Arabia and Egypt, won the elections in August 1955.²⁴⁰ Al-Quwatli's victory had prompted Nuri to declare to the British and American ambassadors that Syria was controlled by "an evilly-disposed minority"²⁴¹ and that Iraq "could not allow the situation to deteriorate much further."²⁴² Nuri had further stated that Iraq would have to intervene, possibly militarily, if the Syrians did not "get rid of the subversive elements and those unfriendly to Iraq."²⁴³ The Foreign Office, however, had opposed such action by Iraq at the time. Surprisingly enough, a few months later, in October, Nuri had explained to American Ambassador Waldemar Gallman that he did not intend to intervene militarily in Syria or "force any particular kind of association with Iraq on Syria."²⁴⁴ He had allowed for the possibility, however, that Syria might ask for military assistance or some kind of association with Iraq. Nuri's statement to Gallman was in response to a report that Syria had received arms from Czechoslovakia, a fact over which "he [Nuri] expressed great concern."²⁴⁵ Nuri's response to Syrian developments suggests an increasing frustration on his part until October of 1955.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁰ For Iraqi involvement in the election campaign see al-'Arabi, Nuri Basha, p. 342.

²⁴¹ Lucas, Divided We Stand., p. 114.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri, p. 162.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Andrew Rathmell, Secret War in the Middle East: The Covert Struggle for Syria, 1949-1961 (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1995), p. 119. Patrick Seale states that both Chief of Staff Rafiq 'Arif and his deputy, Major General al-Daghistani, had opposed the use of force against Syria. In their view Iraqi military intervention in Syria would benefit no one but Israel, and a union resulting from such an operation would not constitute a strong state. Due to the generals' opposition and excuses, armed intervention had not been given priority, Patrick Seale, The Struggle For Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics 1945-1958, p. 268; The Iraq Times, August 22, pp. 1-2. It is not quite clear why Nuri had modified his belligerent statements from August with respect to Syria. One likely possibility is that the opposition of the Western

Meanwhile both the British and the Americans, with the former in the lead, had adopted the view that more forceful action was needed in Syria to ensure that a pro-West regime assumed power, though they still did not endorse overt military intervention by Iraq. The main reason for the gradual change in Western attitudes to Syria had been the attempts in 1955 and early 1956 to make Nasser's policies less antagonistic to the West and Israel, with the eventual goal of cooperation with the West and a settlement of the Palestinian issue.²⁴⁷ These attempts had ended in failure in March 1956 when Foreign Secretary Selwyn "Lloyd recommended that Eden give approval to Nuri's efforts to 'create a situation'" in which Syria would appeal for Iraqi intervention.²⁴⁸ It is obvious that the British position had moved from opposing to accepting military intervention if a pretext was first created.

By 1956 the increasing talk of an Egyptian-Syrian union had caused considerable alarm in Baghdad. The Nuri-regime's great concern is not surprising, since such a development would have radically strengthened Nasser's position in the Arab world at the expense of Nuri's. Also, it might have provoked Israel to take action sooner or later, and it would have placed an anti-Iraqi regime in control of Syria, a fact which might in turn have caused problems along the western border, and increased propaganda against

powers to the use of force had prompted him to adopt a less aggressive policy towards Damascus. Another possible explanation is that Nuri had not really meant what he had told the two Western ambassadors on the earlier occasion, and that his purpose had merely been to sound the Western powers out regarding more proactive policies towards Syria. The fact that Iraqi military leaders as early as 1954 had drawn up a plan for military intervention in Syria in response to a request from Nuri suggests that he had seriously considered the military option. Deputy Chief of Staff Ghazi al-Daghistani had subsequently advised against the plan, however, since it would have provoked Israeli military intervention. As a result Nuri had abandoned the military plan and focused on a covert operation in its stead.

²⁴⁷ Rathmell, Secret War in the Middle East, pp. 112-113.

²⁴⁸ Evelyn Shuckburg, Descent to Suez, New York: W.W. Norton and Co, 1986, pp. 289-290. The Americans, however, had still favored a somewhat more cautious line towards Syria until October 1956 when they had decided that Syrian President Quwatli's scheduled visit to the Soviet Union later the same month testified to his wish to establish closer ties with Moscow, Rathmell, Secret War, pp. 114-115, 118.

the regime in Baghdad.²⁴⁹ Another important factor influencing Iraqi sensitivity with regard to the policies of Damascus was the Iraqi dependence on the petroleum pipeline to the Mediterranean; with a Nasserist government in Syria the operation of this pipeline could be in danger.²⁵⁰ An Egyptian-Syrian union was therefore an alarming prospect to Baghdad. Disruption of the flow of Iraqi oil to Europe during the Suez Crisis had cost Iraq considerable loss in oil revenues.

The nationalization of the Suez Canal, the Suez Crisis, and the coup attempts sponsored by Iraq and the Western powers further increased Egyptian influence in Syria at Iraq's expense.²⁵¹ These events had also accelerated and facilitated the union of Egypt and Syria under Gamal 'Abdul Nasser's leadership in the United Arab Republic on February 1, 1958. The Arab Republic had signified a great propaganda and strategic victory for Nasser and a disaster for Nuri who had worked so hard to tie Syria to Iraq.²⁵² Nuri's policies towards Egypt and Syria had only resulted in alienating Syrian military officers and politicians, enhancing Nasser's stature in the Arab world, and increasing Iraq's isolation. The similarity of British and Iraqi policies towards Egypt and Syria in the middle of the 1950s had, not surprisingly, had similar effects—both countries' isolation and considerable loss of influence in the region. Furthermore, these same policies had in Iraq's case caused an intifadha against the regime and strengthened the domestic opposition to Nuri's government among Iraqi politicians and military officers, greatly contributing to the Iraqi Revolution in 1958.

²⁴⁹ Syrian anti-Iraq propaganda had in 1955 rivaled the strident broadcasts of the Egyptian radio station Sawt al-'Arab, Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri, p. 41.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.; al-'Arabi, Nuri Basha, p. 354.

²⁵¹ Al-'Arabi, Nuri Basha, p. 372.

²⁵² At a Baghdad Pact meeting in Ankara on January 1, 1958 it was obvious that the situation in Syria was alarming to Nuri. He had stated that the union between Egypt and Syria was a communist movement that needed to be obstructed. If Syria rejected such action, intervention was necessary to prevent the union, al-'Arabi, Nuri Basha, pp. 373-374.

Leftist Syrian politicians were not interested in closer ties with a monarchical regime. Iraqi leaders therefore became more involved in Syrian internal affairs to achieve their objectives. This was done both by overt and covert means. The Nuri regime even went as far as contemplating resorting to force to realize its Fertile Crescent project. Also, Syria's contiguity with Iraq explains Nuri's interest in Syrian developments and his sensitivity to the policies of its governments. Were a radical party or group of individuals to assume power in Syria, this could possibly strengthen the position of the Iraqi opposition, since the latter would likely draw inspiration from such a development in Syria, just as it had done in the case of Nasser's policies. Moreover, Syria was of great symbolic and strategic importance to Nuri as a battleground for Egyptian and Iraqi propaganda, and as a crucial part of Nuri's containment policy toward Egypt. Consequently, the "loss" of this country to Nasserism would considerably reduce Nuri's standing in the Arab world, and in Nuri's view greatly endanger Iraq's national security. Finally, Western interests more or less coincided with Iraqi interests in Syria, though both Britain and the United States opposed an Iraqi invasion of the country, preferring covert means to install a pro-West Syrian government. Finally, there were differences between Britain and the U.S. as to the extent to which they were willing to endorse Iraqi policies towards Syria.

Nuri's position on Israel

Nuri pursued policies towards Israel on two levels, the official and the unofficial. In official statements Nuri could take quite an aggressive stance, depending on what political advantage could be derived from such a position, both in the domestic and in the greater Arab arena. An example of a firm stance taken on Israel was his first public

statement after his return to office in 1954, when he had emphasized the need for Arab cooperation “[t]o repel the Zionist menace.”²⁵³ Following the British-French-Israeli attack on Egypt Nuri even went as far as calling for “the elimination of Israel and the return of the million Arab refugees to their homeland as the best solution for the Palestine problem.”²⁵⁴ The above quotes show that Nuri adapted his position on Israel to changing domestic and Middle Eastern developments.

Nuri displayed a more pragmatic streak in private conversations. British Ambassador Michael Wright reported that Nuri had stated in June 1957 in private conversations concerning the Israeli-Palestinian issue that

one of two solutions ought to be adopted; - either the implementation, more or less, of the majority proposals of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine of August 31, 1947 which would involve Israel giving up at least much of the territory which was not allotted to her by the 1947 Resolution of the Assembly, or...a reversion to the...proposals put forward by India, Iran and Yugoslavia...for a Federal State in Palestine...both Jewish and Arab. The best means of reaching the first alternative would be for the United Nations Force to take over the territory now held by Israel which had not been allotted to her by the 1947 Resolution. As regards refugees, ...they must be offered the choice of returning to Israel or of being compensated. He [Nuri] believed (as he has often stated before) that only a small number would...wish to settle in Israel. ...[N]either resolution...could...be reached unless the United States were prepared to bring sufficient influence and pressure to bear on Israel.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri, p. 167.

²⁵⁴ The Iraq Times, November 14, 1956, p. 1. Several years earlier Foreign Minister Fadhil al-Jamali had echoed a similar sentiment by stating that “[w]hoever thinks of making peace with the enemy signs the death warrant of all the Arab nations,” Filastin, June 24, 1951, quoted in Israel’s Foreign Relations: Selected Documents 1947-1974, edited by Meron Medzini (Jerusalem: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1976), vol. i, p. 336.

²⁵⁵ Wright to D.S. Laskey, Foreign Office, Confidential, June 12, 1957, FO371/128056. The first solution, the one based on the U.N. 1947 Partition Plan, had been rejected by Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion in a speech to the Knesset on October 15, 1956: “[It] cannot be accepted as a step toward peace. This is a disguised attack on the integrity of our borders,” *ibid.*, p. 361. Later in his speech Ben Gurion had sounded somewhat more pragmatic when he had emphasized that: “We have said more than once that frontier rectifications here and there, through mutual agreement and for the benefit of both sides can be considered,” *ibid.* Nuri had proposed a solution similar to the second one referred to above as early as February 1939 at the London Conference on Palestine. Ben Gurion has summarized what Nuri said: “In the Arab view the Balfour Declaration could not be permitted to delay the execution or to affect the interpretation of the prior pledge to the Arabs. All British officers then serving in the Middle East had shared the view that the Jewish National Home was to be no more than a cultural and spiritual center and

Nuri's views expressed in private conversations could most likely have been termed "pragmatic" in an Arab context, but would certainly not have been regarded as such by Israeli politicians.

Nuri recognized that Israel constituted a serious problem not only to the Arabs but also to Western interests in the Middle East, since the Israel problem "gave communist Russia the opportunity of deliberately keeping the waters in the Middle East troubled, and of inflaming opinion against the West and the friends of the West."²⁵⁶ In conversations with American Ambassador Waldemar Gallman, however, Nuri was pragmatic, stating that "[o]nce an agreement had been reached in principle...between the Arab states and Israel]..he would favor lifting the economic boycott. The existence of the state of Israel was a fact that had to be accepted."²⁵⁷ Being the source of the aforementioned problems, the Israel issue was at the same time an asset as well to Nuri, in so far as it could be

that Palestine would enjoy self-government as part of an Arab state," David Ben Gurion, My Talks With Arab Leaders (Jerusalem: Keter Books, 1972), p. 228. Ben Gurion's position on the Arab refugees expressed in a conversation with an unnamed emissary of President Dwight Eisenhower in January 1956 had been that if allowed to return Arab refugees would constitute a fifth column that would destroy Israel. The Prime Minister had, however, been willing to assist Arab governments in Syria, Egypt, and Iraq to resettle the refugees "in the unoccupied empty spaces" of those countries, Ben-Gurion, My Talks, p. 286. Ben-Gurion assumed no responsibility for the flight of the Arab refugees but had allowed 40,000 refugees to return "to facilitate the reunification of families," *ibid*. He compared Israel's efforts to assist and integrate Jewish refugees into Israeli society with the indifference of Arab governments to the Arab refugees, dismissing this treatment as exploitation of "them [Arab refugees] as a political weapon against Israel," Ben-Gurion, My Talks, p. 286. Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett had also confirmed in a review of Israel's foreign policy in May of 1955 that Israeli leaders had no intention of allowing the return "of tens of thousands of people even as a price for peace," Itamar Rabinovich, and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., Israel in the Middle East: Documents and Readings on Society, Politics, and Foreign Relations 1948-present (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 96. According to an American emissary to the Middle East Nasser took a position on the Arab refugees similar to that of Nuri, emphasizing the two problems of repatriation and compensation for refugees. Numbers were not the main issue, but the refugees must be guaranteed the freedom of choice. An issue that distinguished Nasser from Nuri, however, was the former's emphasis on territorial continuity of the Arab countries in Africa and Asia. Ben-Gurion's interpretation was that this meant that Nasser was demanding the southernmost part of Israel, including the port of Eilat, which was "out of the question," Ben-Gurion, My Talks, pp. 277 and 284; Ben-Gurion does not mention the emissary by name, but Yaacov Herzog states that Secretary of the Treasury Robert Anderson had met with Ben-Gurion twice in January 1956 and once in March, Rabinovich and Reinharz, Israel in the Middle East, p. 105.

²⁵⁶ Wright to D.S. Laskey, to the Foreign Office, Confidential, June 12, 1957, FO371/128056.

²⁵⁷ Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri, p. 170.

exploited by him to deflect criticism of Iraqi nationalists. Criticizing Israel incurred no political costs to Nuri, since the Western powers were informed of his true position. Nuri's hope to distract the attention of the nationalists, however, appears not to have been fulfilled due to the opposition's focus on his relationship with Britain.

Iraqi-Egyptian Relations:

Nuri's was a troubled relationship with Nasser, which was to be expected since the two men had diametrically different visions of the future of the Middle East. One of the greatest impediments to normal relations between the Egyptian president and the Iraqi prime minister was both men's aspirations to leadership in the Arab world. Iraqi-Egyptian rivalry, however, did not commence with the Egyptian Revolution in 1952, but goes back at least to the end of World War II when the independence of Syria and Lebanon from France left a power vacuum in the region.²⁵⁸

Nuri was very sensitive to Egyptian criticism, to which testify the numerous occasions on which he felt he needed to defend his foreign policy, in public addresses as well as in private conversations.²⁵⁹ Egyptian anti-Iraqi propaganda broadcasts from Sawt al-'Arab were a thorn in the flesh of the Iraqi regime.²⁶⁰ Another Egyptian-controlled station, Radio Free Iraq, also pursued a strident anti-Nuri line, but the Egyptians denied any responsibility for the broadcasts.²⁶¹ Following Iraqi threats that the Iraqi Ambassador might be withdrawn if the issue were not addressed, the station was shut down in June

²⁵⁸ Malcolm Kerr also argues that Egyptian-Mesopotamian rivalry dates back to Pharaonic times. Kerr, The Arab Cold War, p. 2.

²⁵⁹ Kerr, The Arab Cold War, p. 37.

²⁶⁰ Walid Muhammad Sa'id Al-A'zami, Nuri al-Sa'id wa al-Sira' ma'a 'Abd al-Nasir [Nuri al-Sa'id and the Struggle with 'Abd al-Nasir] (Baghdad: al-Maktaba al-'Alamiyya, 1988), p. 72.

²⁶¹ U.S. Air Force Attaché to the Department of the Air Force, Secret, May 13, 1955, 787.00(W)/5-1355. Iraq had its own propaganda station called Radio Free Egypt, al-'Arabi, Nuri Basha, p. 358.

1955.²⁶² Anti-Iraqi propaganda was also broadcast from other Egyptian radio stations, with the Egyptians making veiled references to the Portsmouth Treaty riots in January 1948. In a broadcast on January 26, 1955 the state-controlled Cairo radio indirectly incited Iraqis to reject the proposed Turkish-Iraqi Agreement and bring down the Nuri regime.²⁶³ Iraq's close military ties with non-Arab countries constituted a major source of tension between Cairo and Baghdad, since Nasser's objective was the opposite to that of Nuri, namely to pursue a foreign policy independent of both military blocs and to prevent foreign powers from maintaining a military presence or gaining a foothold in the Middle East.²⁶⁴ As has been mentioned already, one of the three principles of Nuri's foreign policy was an alliance with Britain, a fact which made an understanding with Nasser virtually impossible.

One of the few measures Nuri could take to counter Nasser's aggressive propaganda was to demonstrate, whenever an opportunity was offered, that he was a good Arab nationalist and champion of the Arab cause by offering assistance to any Arab country which was attacked by Israel.²⁶⁵ An example of this was Nuri's foreign minister Burhan al-Din Bashayan's announcement to the Arab world that Iraq would not hesitate to provide "any military aid required...in repelling Zionist aggression,"²⁶⁶ and that his country was "prepared to implement its obligations under the Arab League Collective Security Pact."²⁶⁷ Another measure available in Nuri's foreign policy arsenal and frequently resorted to was to publicly express support for Arab liberation movements and

²⁶² U.S. Air Force Attaché to the Department of the Air Force, Secret, June 18, 1955, 787.00(W)/6-1855.

²⁶³ Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri, p. 38.

²⁶⁴ Nuri believed that the Arabs did not possess the necessary military capability to pursue a policy of non-alignment, al-A'zami, Nuri al-Sa'id, pp. 83-84.

²⁶⁵ The Iraq Times, November 5, 1955, p. 2.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

Arab states which struggled to achieve independence, such as Algeria.²⁶⁸ The advantage of the two measures referred to above was of course that they incurred minimal political costs.

Despite Nuri's authoritarian leadership style there was division in his administration over what was the best policy to adopt towards Nasser. The former believed that the most effective way to deal with the Egyptian leader was to put pressure on him, expecting that Britain would join him in pursuing such a policy towards Egypt. Nuri also hoped that Saudi Arabia would be drawn away from Egypt by asking the Americans to facilitate a settlement of Anglo-Saudi differences.²⁶⁹ Najib al-Rawi, Iraq's ambassador to Egypt, however, held the view that such a policy would prove counter-productive. According to the British ambassador in Cairo, al-Rawi argued that "[b]ehind Nasser were the Free Officers who were more extremist than he."²⁷⁰ A consequence of exerting pressure on Nasser would be that he would turn to the Russians, and a good reason for the British not to put pressure on Egypt was that the Egyptian leader could cause problems for the British over the Suez Canal Zone Base Agreement. In al-Rawi's view, the Saudis would not break with Nasser for fear that he could incite Saudi citizens to overthrow the House of Sa'ud.²⁷¹ For the above reasons the Iraqi Ambassador concluded that "as long as there were differences between Egypt and Iraq and it was clear that the U.K. was trying to

²⁶⁸ In 1956 the Iraqi government conveyed a verbal protest to French diplomats regarding "violat[i]ons of humanitarian principles" in Algeria, The Iraq Times, October 25, 1956, p. 2. In August 1957 the American air attaché in Baghdad reported that the Iraqi government had decided to donate ID75,000 to Algerian families "suffering from the present military operations," in addition to ID125,000 donated by the Iraqi public, US Air Attaché, Baghdad to Department of the Air Force, Confidential, Routine, August 3, 1957, 787.00(W)/8-357.

²⁶⁹ Nuri was most likely referring to Anglo-Saudi differences over the Buraimi Oasis.

²⁷⁰ Ambassador Trevelyan, British Embassy Cairo to A.D.M. Ross, the Foreign Office, Confidential, June 22, 1956, FO371/121651.

²⁷¹ Ibn Sa'ud later concluded that Nasser was a greater threat to his regime than the Hashimites and moved closer to Nuri's position on the Egyptian leader, Seale, The Struggle For Syria, p. 80.

build up Iraq at Egypt's expense, the Egyptians would continue to make difficulties for the British in Arabia and elsewhere. As an example, the Egyptians had recently sent men to Saudi Arabia to stir up guerilla warfare on the frontier."²⁷² Not surprisingly, Nuri persisted in his policies towards Nasser.

Nuri also considered aggressive propaganda action to deal with the Egyptian president. A British Embassy report states that the Iraqi prime minister was planning to release a statement in mid-August of 1956 to the effect that "over the past year Nasser's foreign policy has served the interests not of Egypt and the Arabs but of the Zionists and Communists."²⁷³ Furthermore, the statement would reveal that Nasser had responded favorably to Anglo-American efforts encouraging him to play a leading role in bringing about an Arab-Israeli settlement. The statement would also disclose that the Egyptian leader had "asked for and obtained assurance from Nuri that Iraq would not exploit any such action by him to his detriment."²⁷⁴ Nasser's decision to accept a Soviet bloc offer to purchase arms, however, "had led successively to Communist penetration of Egypt, the withdrawal of the Western offer of aid for the Aswan dam, and finally to the seizure of the Suez Canal,"²⁷⁵ It is doubtful whether the latter part of the statement would have had the intended effect in the Arab world, since the Cold War rhetoric suggests that it was directed at a Western audience and not at Arab public opinion.

²⁷² Ambassador Trevelyan, British Embassy Cairo to A.D.M. Ross, the Foreign Office, Confidential, June 22, 1956, FO371/121651.

²⁷³ British Embassy Baghdad to the Foreign Office, Immediate, Confidential, August 9, 1956, FO371/121651.

²⁷⁴ Ibid. Robert Anderson, Eisenhower's emissary to the Middle East, confirmed to Ben-Gurion that Nuri al-Sa'id had stated that "if Nasser makes peace he will not use it against him, but will do the same," David Ben-Gurion, My Talks With Arab Leaders, p. 280. Nasser feared that it would have negative domestic repercussions for him if it leaked out that he was involved in talks aiming at peace with Israel, Ben-Gurion, My Talks, pp. 278-279.

²⁷⁵ The British Embassy Baghdad to the Foreign Office, Immediate, Confidential, August 9, 1956, FO371/121651.

Nuri hoped that both the United States and Britain would support the above statement. Both countries' ambassadors agreed that Nuri's plan might be useful for propaganda purposes, but the British Ambassador Michael Wright expressed doubts about the wisdom of referring to Nasser's willingness to bargain with the West over Israel. In Wright's view it would benefit Nuri's statement if he also pointed out that

Nasser is interested in the Israeli problem only in so far as it can be used to further his own designs of dominating the Arab world; that he is prepared to ditch anyone and anything if it suits him; and that while complaining bitterly when any other Arab State takes an independent line he never consults the rest of the Arab world when acting himself.²⁷⁶

Wright's suggestion suffers from the same basic flaw as the latter part of Nuri's proposed statement—it was not directed at an Arab audience. What mattered to the latter was Nasser's vitriolic anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist propaganda. Nasser would always enjoy superiority over Nuri in the field of propaganda, since the latter could not engage in criticism of his British and American allies.

Nuri's plans to issue an anti-Nasser statement discussed in the above paragraph and the British and American ambassadors' reactions to this scheme suggest that the thinking of these men, in particular that of Nuri and Wright, bore great similarity to one another. Nuri's plan to emphasize that Nasser's policies served the interests of Communism demonstrates that Nuri and the Western powers shared the conviction that the Soviet Union posed a tangible threat to the Middle East. Britain and the United States did not take into consideration, however, that Nuri was one of the very few leaders in the Arab Middle East who wholly embraced the Western concept of containment. The failure of London and Washington to realize or accept the implications of this fact is difficult to

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

explain other than as a consequence of over-emphasis on Cold War strategies, and ignorance and disregard of the force of Arab nationalism, which so captivated Arab public opinion.²⁷⁷ Nuri's disregard of this fact, however, is difficult to justify, since he was a Middle Eastern and not a Western statesman, and should be viewed in the context of his personal rivalry with Nasser.

Another significant circumstance is the date Wright's aforementioned report was sent to the Foreign Office, August 9, 1956, which is more than two weeks after Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal on July 26. The positive reactions in the Arab world to this decision could neither have escaped the attention of leaders in London and Washington nor of Nuri in Baghdad. One can therefore conclude that the facts were there to see, but policymakers interpreted them in light of prevailing strategic considerations or personal antipathies and rivalries. This would explain why Nasser's obvious popularity with Arab public opinion was disregarded and why London, Washington, and Baghdad entertained false hopes to denigrate the Egyptian leader. The prospects were bleak that Western and Iraqi propaganda would convince Arab public opinion of a communist threat to the Middle East which was more serious than the threat to Arab countries posed by France, Britain, the United States, and their allies in the region, in particular Israel, but also Iraq.

The chances of success for Nuri's project to demonstrate to Arab public opinion a link between Zionism and Nasser, which would presumably be disastrous to the latter's image

²⁷⁷ There were, however, Western observers in the Middle East who realized how disastrous British policies towards the region were. In August 1956 Michael Ionides, British member of the Iraqi Development Board, wrote the following in a letter: "...Anti-Zionism, uniting the Arabs, is fast becoming merged with anti-Imperialism and anti-Britishism; Zionism and Britain are becoming in their eyes, identified...." "...No policy can possibly go down with the Arabs unless it includes, unequivocally, a genuine opposition to expansionist Zionism; and unless we do that quickly, Iraq will go the way of Egypt....," Ionides, Divide And Lose, p. 142.

as the foremost champion of the Arab cause, were most likely negligible. Iraq's struggle against Zionism could not compare favorably with that of Egypt.²⁷⁸ Furthermore, drawing attention to policies towards Israel would only bring to the fore Western support for Israel, an undesirable consequence for the West as well as for Iraq, since any discussion of the Western position on Israel would reflect negatively on Iraq as well, due to its close ties with Britain and the United States. Wright's doubts concerning this aspect of Nuri's plans suggest that the British ambassador was aware of the problems such an attempt might cause. Finally, Iraq's membership in the Baghdad Pact, a defense organization highly unpopular in Iraq, was sharply criticized by the Egyptian radio station Sawt al-'Arab.²⁷⁹ Had Nuri launched his new anti-Nasser propaganda campaign, his relationship with the West would naturally have been subjected to even more violent Egyptian attacks, since Nasser's record of cooperation with "imperialist" powers was much cleaner than that of Nuri. This impression had been even further reinforced by the nationalization of the Suez Canal.²⁸⁰ For the aforementioned reasons Nuri's plan would thus quite possibly have backfired. It must be said in Wright's defense, however, that he had recognized some of the likely negative consequences of Nuri's project.

According to Wright, Nuri, who was in London at the time, viewed the nationalization of the Suez Canal as

part of the concerted plan between Nasser and the communists to establish Nasser as the leader of Arab nationalism and thus to give him a grip over all Arab

²⁷⁸ Nuri had a clear disadvantage due to the lack of contiguity between Iraq and Israel. Conversely, Nasser exploited the fact that Israel and Egypt have common borders to dispatch fedayeen on cross-border raids into Israel.

²⁷⁹ Al-A'zami, *Nuri al-Sa'id wa al-Sira' ma'a 'Abd al-Nasir*, p. 72.

²⁸⁰ Fedchenko, *Irak v Bor'be za Nezavosimost'*, p. 208. Fedchenko states that the news of the nationalization was received with enthusiasm in Iraq. In order to demonstrate their solidarity with the Egyptian people, Iraqis declared August 16, 1956 a day of solidarity with Egypt. The nationalization of the Suez Canal was further marked with a general strike in Iraq. The strike was deemed a threat to public order in the country and suppressed by the authorities, but demonstrations continued in September and October.

countries... He urged that his [Nasser] action should be resisted and his pretensions deflated...But he warned that if action were at any stage to be taken against Nasser it must not be in conjunction with or to the benefit of Israel. He left London reassured that this warning should be heeded. The President of Pakistan [Iskander Mirza] told him subsequently that he had given a similar warning and had received similar assurances. Provided Israel were kept out of the matter Nuri was confident that the troubles could be dealt with and that the whole situation in the Arab world would thereafter improve again.²⁸¹

It is clear from Wright's account that Nuri was not averse to the idea of Britain teaching Nasser a lesson, obviously believing that this would benefit his own claim to Arab leadership, but that Nuri at the same time feared the dangerous repercussions on the Iraqi regime of Israeli involvement in an operation against Egypt. He was obviously under the impression that the British would not take joint action with Israel. The impression that the British government had made some sort of assurances to this effect is strengthened by the Pakistani president's testimony.²⁸²

²⁸¹ Wright to Selwyn Lloyd, the Foreign Office, Confidential, February 8, 1957, FO371/128038. In his book Nasser, The Cairo Documents, Muhammad Hassanein Haykal corroborates Wright's account of Nuri's conversations in London at the time of Nasser's nationalization of the Canal. Heikal claims that Nuri, in reply to Eden's request for his view on Nasser's initiative, had stated that "...Only one way lies before you, and it is to strike now, forcefully, or it will be too late and [the opportunity] will be lost," Muhammad Hassanein Haykal, Nasser: The Cairo Documents, p. 96, in al-A'zami, Nuri al-Sa'id, p. 75. Nuri had further stated that Nasser's popularity in the Arab world would double as a result of the nationalization.

²⁸² In a letter to al-A'zami former Iraqi Prime Minister Fadhil al-Jamali claims that Nuri knew of London's intentions at the end of July and had informed him (al-Jamali) and former Prime Minister Tawfiq al-Suwaidi of Britain's imminent attack on Egypt. Nuri had assigned to al-Suwaidi to travel to Egypt, since al-Jamali had declined to do so, and convey this piece of information to Nasser, Muhammad Fadhil al-Jamali, letter to al-A'zami dated June 20, 1979. Al-A'zami emphasizes, however, that there are contradictions between what al-Jamali states in his letter and what he writes in his memoirs, published in 1964. In the latter al-Jamali claims that he had received instructions from Nuri to return to Baghdad from Rome to discuss the possible impact on Iraq of the planned British attack on Egypt. Conversely, al-Jamali states in his letter to al-A'zami that he and al-Suwaidi had been in Beirut at the time and received instructions from Nuri to return to Baghdad. In both the letter and the memoirs al-Jamali further claims that he had asked the British ambassador to convey to Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd a request that Britain not get involved in an attack on Egypt. Al-Jamali also states that he had expected that Nuri do likewise and convey the same message to the British Embassy in Baghdad. Al-A'zami points out that al-Jamali does not shed light on the reasons that prompted him to act the way he did, adding that had his intention been to demonstrate his true patriotic sentiments towards Egypt he ought to have informed the Egyptian ambassador in Baghdad of the British plans and thereby clear himself of suspicions regarding his complicity in the Suez Crisis, al-A'zami, Nuri al-Sa'id, pp. 76-77. Surprisingly enough, al-A'zami does not focus on what appears to be the most important and controversial claim, namely that Nuri had allegedly dispatched his foreign minister to inform his archrival Nasser of the impending British attack. This claim is not very convincing. Nuri had no reason

The previous two chapters have argued that Nuri's domestic policies were a source of concern for the British, while this chapter has contended that British policies towards the Middle East also complicated Nuri's own position both at home and in the Arab world.²⁸³ The Suez Crisis is the most obvious instance of such policies. The Israeli-Anglo-French attack on Egypt had exposed the Iraqi monarchy to the danger of being swept away by popular unrest.²⁸⁴ How insecure the Iraqi prime minister had felt had been further

to inform his rival for leadership in the Arab world of the secret plans of a very close ally. Furthermore, Wright's account of the London meeting with Nuri shows that the latter had no objection to overthrowing or at least teaching Nasser a lesson, on condition that Israel not participate in such an operation. Israel's participation in a British operation against Egypt had not been discussed during the London meeting. Had Nuri known of Britain's collusion with Israel, he would have had a weighty reason to inform Nasser, since such an operation would have had very serious repercussions on Nuri's own position in Iraq. Still, Nuri would not likely have resorted to such drastic action immediately. He would certainly have attempted to persuade the British to keep the Israelis out of the plan, as is suggested by the conversation he had in London. Also, al-A'zami has raised a legitimate point above, but one could argue, in al-Jamali's defense, that there was no need for him to inform the Egyptian ambassador of the British plan, since Nuri had allegedly decided to dispatch al-Suwaidi to Egypt to convey this information. Based upon the aforementioned one can conclude that there was no reason for Nuri to alert Nasser to the impending British attack, since the former was not privy to the Israeli involvement in the plan to attack Egypt. The question then remains, why would al-Jamali make such a claim? One possible explanation is that he was concerned about his political legacy. However, at the time al-Jamali was not a minister in Nuri's cabinet and what Nuri did would therefore not have reflected negatively on al-Jamali. Another possibility is that Nuri changed his mind and never sent al-Suwaidi to Egypt, but as has been pointed out already, he never had any reason in the first place to send anyone to Egypt on such a mission.

²⁸³ Michael Ionides, British member of the Iraqi Development Board, discusses in a letter dated July 31, 1956, a few days after the nationalization of the Suez Canal, the probable consequences of the decision by the United States and Britain to rescind the loan they had approved for the construction of the Egyptian High Dam. He argues that the Arabs will interpret this decision as Western support for Israel, that Nuri's position will be eroded, and that the domestic opposition to Iraq's membership in the Baghdad Pact will increase. Ionides recommends that the British look for a new Iraqi leader to support after Nuri, and that they change their policy radically: "Unless that policy includes unequivocal opposition to expansionist Zionism it will not be acceptable to the Arabs, and the tale of troubles will go on," Ionides, *Divide And Lose*, pp. 136-137. Ionides's prediction turned out to be surprisingly accurate.

²⁸⁴ Wright to Selwyn Lloyd, the Foreign Office, Confidential, February 8, 1957, FO371/128038. Ionides describes Nuri's dilemma as follows: "If the invasion went on, to Israel's evident benefit, Nuri would fall unless he broke with Britain but then, without British support, Nuri would fall. If the invasion was stopped, that would be a victory for Nasser; if the invasion went on, that would be an even greater victory for Nasser, for with Nuri the Baghdad Pact would fall too so far as Arabs were concerned, and that was Nasser's primary aim," Ionides, *Divide And Lose*, p. 172. Faced with the possibility of his own overthrow, Nuri had immediately attempted to exert damage control to preempt criticism that most likely would have incited Iraqi public opinion against the regime. Nuri had declared that his government was considering extending military assistance to Egypt, and announced that Iraq had severed diplomatic relations with France and would boycott Baghdad Pact meetings attended by British representatives, Wright to Selwyn Lloyd, the Foreign Office, Confidential, February 8, 1957, FO371/128038; *Pravda*, October 31, 1956; *Krasnaya Zvezda*, November 10, 1956; both sources referred to in Fedchenko, *Irak v Borbe za Nezavisimost'*, p. 209. On November 9 Iraqi Foreign Minister Burhan al-Din Bashayan had informed the

accentuated by his crackdown on opposition leaders, several of whom had been arrested.²⁸⁵ Nuri had been stunned by the British-French ultimatum to Israel and Egypt on October 29, 1956, since he had expected to be consulted prior to any further action by the British. Furthermore, the Iraqi prime minister had believed that the ensuing Anglo-French operation would be a police action against both the attacking Israelis and the attacked Egyptians.²⁸⁶ He had realized he had to act quickly to reduce the damaging impact of the crisis and had therefore designed a plan to the effect that when ceasefire was announced

it should be as far as possible in response to an appeal from the fellow members of Britain in the Baghdad Pact. In this way the Moslem members could claim credit for a major part in putting an end to fighting, the Pact might be saved, and Britain's position vis-à-vis the Arab world made easier.²⁸⁷

The above discussion shows that it is possible that the British had caused as many problems to Nuri with their attack on Egypt, as he had to them with his unpopular domestic and foreign policies.

Wright states in a report that the situation in Baghdad was so serious that “[i]t was, in fact, touch and go whether Iraq would withdraw from the Baghdad Pact unless Britain did so, and whether relations with Britain would be broken off.”²⁸⁸ Nuri was not likely to take such drastic action, however, since he must have resorted to severing diplomatic

French ambassador to Baghdad of Iraq's decision to sever diplomatic relations with France. The decision applied only to diplomatic relations, meaning that France's consular staff would remain in Iraq, The Iraq Times, November 10, 1956, pp. 1 and 23. Iraq's reaction to the Suez Crisis had come a week later than that of several other Arab states. Jordan had severed relations with France on November 1, a few hours after Egypt's decision to do so, and Syria broke relations with both France and Britain the following day, Love, Suez, p. 568; Rathmell, Secret War In The Middle East, p. 123.

²⁸⁵ Nicholas G. Thacher, First Secretary of Embassy (for the Ambassador) to the Department of State, Confidential, July 18, 1957, 787.00/7-1957.

²⁸⁶ Wright to Selwyn Lloyd, the Foreign Office, Confidential, February 8, 1957, FO371/128038.

²⁸⁷ Wright to Selwyn Lloyd, the Foreign Office, Confidential, February 8, 1957, FO371/128038.

²⁸⁸ Wright to Selwyn Lloyd, the Foreign Office, Confidential, February 8, 1957, FO371/128038. Ionides writes that the Arab League had held a meeting in Beirut in November, at which “[a]ll the Arab States, Iraq included, had resolved publicly that unless there were a complete withdrawal of Anglo-French forces from Sinai, there would be a total diplomatic break, including a break between Iraq and Britain,” Ionides, Divide And Lose,” p. 180.

relations with France precisely in order to reduce the need for breaking off relations with Britain as well. Nuri had most likely calculated that the former measure would satisfy public opinion to such an extent that the monarchy could remain in place. Furthermore, it is clear that Nuri had believed he could avoid severing relations with Britain by introducing a state of emergency. Breaking off diplomatic relations with London and withdrawing from the Baghdad Pact would certainly have been very popular initiatives, which would have radically improved the regime's image. Such steps would, however, most likely have emboldened the opposition to press for internal reforms as well, and Nuri would have found his position eroded without the support from his British ally and from the other members of the Baghdad Pact, had he opted to withdraw from the Pact.²⁸⁹

Nuri would certainly have attempted to normalize relations with Britain and the Baghdad Pact once he thought he had weathered the storm, but resumption of close ties with Britain and the Pact would have constituted a formidable task, since there would have been little justification for such initiatives in the eyes of the public. Being a shrewd and very experienced politician, Nuri had probably anticipated the likely results of the "precipitous" action discussed above, and therefore decided against burning his bridges. At the same time, it is possible that Nuri had emphasized to Wright how close he had been to breaking off relations with London and withdrawing from the Baghdad Pact in order to impress on the Ambassador how damaging the Suez operation had been to the Iraqi regime in an attempt to achieve concessions from the British government and underscore to the British Iraq's great value as an ally, implying that had Nuri been

²⁸⁹ Wright to Selwyn Lloyd, the Foreign Office, Confidential, February 8, 1957, FO371/128038. In a show of support for the Iraqi regime the Pakistani president, the prime ministers of Pakistan and Turkey, and the foreign minister of Iran had all visited Baghdad in November, demonstrating how important Nuri thought their support was.

consulted beforehand the negative fallout of the Suez Crisis could have been minimized. Finally, the Suez Crisis had also cost Iraq a great deal economically as a result of the Syrian destruction of portions of the Iraq Petroleum Company pipeline effectively cutting off Iraq's revenues from the pumping of oil through Syria to the Mediterranean. Fortunately for the Iraqi government, however, the loss of oil revenues had been balanced to some extent by the huge funds, over £70 million, of the Development Board.²⁹⁰ One can conclude from the above discussion that the Suez Crisis incurred great costs to Nuri, but that the severing of relations with Britain would have caused even more problems, and so the Iraqi leader had never seriously contemplated it.

The strained relations with Egypt continued after the Suez Crisis, with the Egyptians accusing the Iraqis of supplying British planes with fuel "at Iraqi military air bases during the air raids on Egyptian cities and" also claiming "that the wounded of the armies that invaded Egypt were transported to Iraqi hospitals for treatment."²⁹¹ These accusations were dismissed as "fabrications" by the Iraqi government and they were most likely unfounded. Britain had bases on Cyprus and it would have been much easier for British military aircraft to operate from this island than from distant Iraq. Had British bombers

²⁹⁰ Wright to Selwyn Lloyd, the Foreign Office, Confidential, February 8, 1957 (FO371/128038). Ionides states that the funds "represented nine months' expenditure," Ionides, Divide And Lose, p. 187. According to Haykal Syrian nationalist officers had blown up the pipeline. Before the tripartite attack on Egypt these officers had agreed with Nasser to strike against the I.P.C. pipeline upon the receipt of a code word which Nasser would send when the attack commenced. The initial plan had envisioned an attack on the American-owned Trans-Arabian Pipeline in Syria as well, but when it was clear that the United States would not support a military attack on Egypt Nasser had ordered that only the I.P.C. pipeline be blown up, Hayikal, Nasser: The Cairo Documents, pp. 111-112. According to Kennett Love the I.P.C. pipeline had been cut on November 3, following Egyptian attempts to prevent this action, Kennett Love, Suez: The Twice-Fought War, New York: McCraw-Hill Book Company, 1969, p. 568; see also Rathmell, Secret War, p. 123. As a result of the sabotage against the I.P.C. pipeline Iraq's oil output had been cut 75 percent and the loss in oil revenues had amounted to \$180 million by the time the pipeline was repaired in the spring of 1957, Love, Suez, p. 651.

²⁹¹ The Iraq Times, December 13, 1956, pp. 1 and 15. Fedchenko repeats these accusations, treating them as true, Fedchenko, p. 209; 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani, Tarikh al-Wizarat al-'Iraqiyya, vol. x, (Sida, 1961), pp. 110-112.

made sorties from al-Habbaniyya and al-Shu'aiba in Iraq they would have required permission to fly over Jordan to reach their targets in Egypt, and it is highly unlikely that King Hussein would have granted the Royal Air Force such permission, since he would have incurred the wrath of Arab nationalists. The same holds true for Iraq. Furthermore, Ambassador Wright's report discussed above states unequivocally that Nuri had complained about not having been consulted by the British. An operation as the one described in the Egyptian accusations must have been planned in advance and one can therefore conclude that the accusations were mere propaganda.²⁹²

It has been contended in this part of the chapter that Nuri took the British ambassador into his confidence regarding various plans to damage Nasser's image in the Arab world and that Ambassador Wright had tried to dampen Nuri's enthusiasm when he felt that it might have undesirable consequences. It has also been shown that Nuri and Wright displayed ignorance regarding Arab nationalism and chose to disregard the possibility of other reactions to their plans than those which they themselves anticipated. Furthermore, this chapter has argued that the British did not return the confidence Nuri placed in them. The obvious instance is the Suez Crisis when the British government had acted without consulting Nuri. The argument proposed here is that Nuri had focused more on damage control than on reorientation of his foreign policy away from the alliance with Britain. He had never seriously contemplated severing diplomatic relations with London or withdrawing from the Baghdad Pact, instead focusing on cosmetic changes to his foreign policy which would not incur any real political cost, such as breaking off diplomatic

²⁹² Al-'Arabi argues that there is no evidence in British documents that the accusations are true. However, al-'Arabi makes no attempt to explain why the accusations are not convincing, al-'Arabi, Nuri Basha, p. 370.

relations with France and boycotting Baghdad Pact meetings attended by British representatives.

This chapter has argued that Nuri's foreign policy towards Egypt and Syria was based on his vision of the Fertile Crescent, a union or federation of Iraq, Syria, and Jordan under Hashimite leadership. This vision had brought him into conflict with Egypt, a power which had also aspired to Arab leadership. In order to achieve his goal Nuri had relied on Western, in particular British, support. The facts presented here clearly suggest that London played a very active role in coordinating policies with Baghdad to realize Nuri's project and ensure that Britain would benefit from it. The findings corroborate the accusations of the Iraqi opposition that "imperialist" Britain was deeply involved in Nuri's foreign policy. Britain's interests were not automatically those of Iraq, however, as is testified to by the Suez Crisis. Nuri had expected to be consulted by Eden before the Israeli-British-French attack on Egypt and was greatly alarmed, since he realized that Israel's participation in the operation would cause unrest in Iraq. The United States had initially adopted a more cautious approach to dealing with Nasser before Eisenhower had decided to pursue more proactive policies in Syria to bring about regime change. Finally, Israel was an enemy in Nuri's view and had caused serious problems to him during the Suez Crisis. Typically, however, he could exploit the Arab-Israeli issue in his efforts to appear as a champion of the Arab cause in order to offset criticism regarding his pro-British policies.

THE FREE OFFICERS

An anti-regime movement emerged in the Iraqi armed forces in the early 1950s initially in the form of cells or groups organized by individual military officers independently of one another. These groups later merged into one organization—the Free Officers movement—without, however, surrendering their independent thinking, and embracing one single ideology, political program, and leader. This chapter will address two questions pertaining to this circumstance. First, whether there was a causal connection between the deep division and fierce rivalry among different military factions and officers after the July 14 revolution and the fact that the Free Officers movement never constituted a very cohesive organization with one undisputed leader and an unequivocal political, social, and economic program for the post-revolutionary period. Second, whether this circumstance also determined the manner in which the coup was executed.

The Iraqi Army and Politics

The Iraqi military was not entirely unfamiliar with national politics prior to the July 14 coup d'état of 1958. The most important coup was the one which brought Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani back to power on April 1, 1941.²⁹³ This coup compelled 'Abd al-Ilah to leave the country. When he returned to Iraq some of the leaders of the 1941 movement were executed,²⁹⁴ many military units were disbanded, and a large number of lower-rank

²⁹³ Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, pp. 439, 453; Malik Mufti, *Sovereign Creations*, pp. 32, 35.

²⁹⁴ Husain 'Abd al-Khaliq, *Thawrat 14 Tammuz 1958 al-'Iraqiyya wa 'Abd al-Karim Qasim* [14 July 1958 Revolution of Iraq and 'Abd al-Karim Qasim] (Dimashq: Dar al-Hassad lil-Nashr wa al-Tawzi', 2003), p. 75.

officers were forced to retire.²⁹⁵ The memory of 1941 remained with both the military and the civilians involved in the events.

The resentment the above developments caused in the military and among Iraqi nationalists had apparently not been forgotten in the late 1950s and most likely explains the display on July 14, 1958 of Crown Prince ‘Abd al-Ilah’s mutilated body in front of the Ministry of Defense on the site where one of the leaders of the May movement of 1941, the 1941 military coup, had been executed.²⁹⁶ There is no evidence, however, that this bitterness precipitated any attempts at organizing a secret anti-regime movement in the Iraqi officer corps, or that officers critical of ‘Abd al-Ilah’s role in the executions of army officers in 1941 would be prepared to go as far as their colleagues did in 1958. If this assumption is correct, one should be able to point to factors or events which occurred between the early 1940s and 1958 which could have prompted a radicalization of military opposition to the regime.

Origins of the Free Officers Movement

Opinions vary on the origins of the Iraqi Free Officers movement, but it is clear that Engineer Major Rif‘at al-Hajj Sirri was active proselytizing within the armed forces in September of 1952, a few weeks after the Egyptian Revolution of July 23 had overthrown

²⁹⁵ Farhan, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, p. 33. Batatu claims that in the wake of suppression of the 1941 movement “...not a few of the younger officers began to turn away...from the monarchy, which by linking its destiny with the fortunes of the English had, in their eyes, vitiated itself as a symbol of the nation.” Moreover, the reduction of the army by three-fourths by the summer of 1943 as a consequence of the 1941 movement further increased the disaffection in the ranks of the army, Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 766.

²⁹⁶ One of the leaders of the May Movement of 1941, Salah al-Din al-Sabagh, was hanged in front of the Ministry of Defense in October 1945, Marr, The Modern History of Iraq, p. 88.

the monarchy.²⁹⁷ It appears that ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim was another officer who while in Palestine in 1948 entertained plans to create an officers organization because of the Iraqi government’s alleged “collusion with the imperialists and its lack of allegiance to Arab nationalism.”²⁹⁸ Qasim himself, most likely wishing to settle the question of leadership of the Free Officers movement and his revolutionary credentials once and for all, claimed at a press conference in Baghdad that “the revolution that has taken place in Iraq had been uppermost in his mind ever since he graduated from the Military College in 1934.”²⁹⁹ This claim was difficult to surpass, since Qasim was older than the other officers on the Supreme Committee, and more importantly, impossible to verify.³⁰⁰

It is quite possible that the creation of Israel on May 14, 1948, with the ensuing Arab-Israeli military conflict initiated on May 15, the subsequent defeat of the invading armies of Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, and the loss of Palestine, even prior to the Egyptian revolution had instilled into the minds of certain Iraqi army officers a wish to engage in secret political activities against the Iraqi regime.³⁰¹ Furthermore, it is not

²⁹⁷ Uriel Dann claims that the founder of this early cell was Lt.-Col Salih ‘Abd al-Majid al-Samarra’i, the Iraqi military attaché in Amman, and that Sirri, Nazim al-Tabaqchali and ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Shawwaf were members of the group, Uriel Dann, Iraq Under Qassem: A Political History, 1958-1963 (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., Publishers, 1969), pp. 19-20. Majid Khadduri states that Sirri contacted Siddiq Shanshal in 1953, “probably shortly after [he, that is Sirri] had organized the first unit,” Majid Khadduri, Republican Iraq, p. 30. Batatu contends that Sirri was the founder of the Free Officers movement, that his friend Engineer Major Rajab ‘Abd-ul-Majid was the first officer who had been taken into his confidence, and that they had discussed forming cells in the army, Batatu, The Old Classes, pp. 770-71.

²⁹⁸ ‘Abd al-Khaliq Husain, Thawrat 14 Tammuz 1958, p. 15. Geoff Simons’s brief account of Iraqi operations in the Palestine war of 1948 shows, however, that Iraqi forces were involved in both offensive and defensive operations in the Palestine theater until they eventually were withdrawn. Simons, Iraq: From Sumer to Saddam, pp. 206-207.

²⁹⁹ The Iraq Times, July 26, 1958.

³⁰⁰ All members of the Supreme Committee with the exception of Qasim had attended the military academy after 1934, Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 788.

³⁰¹ Avi Shlaim, The Iron Wall (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), pp. 33-34. Sabih ‘Ali Ghalib, Qissat Thawrat 14 Tammuz wa al-Dhubbat al-Ahrar [The Story of the July 14 Revolution and the Free Officers] (Bairut: Dar al-tali‘at li’l-taba‘at wal-nashr, 1968), pp. 12-13. Farhan quotes a Free Officer by name of Nu‘man Mahir who had allegedly attended a meeting of Sirri’s cell at the latter’s home. According to Mahir, Sirri had said at this meeting that he had considered, while participating in the Palestine war, creating an officers organization. Farhan states that he is convinced that there were other officers

unlikely that the defeat on the battle field had fanned their resentment and incited them to attempt to rid their country of a government perceived of as not having done enough to prevent the nakba, the disaster (the creation of Israel and the permanent refugee status of a large number of Palestinians). The successful Egyptian coup four years later indubitably served as a source of direct inspiration for Sirri and other Iraqi officers.³⁰² At the same time, however, the perception of many Iraqi officers that Arab governments could have done more to prevent the nakba was based on their belief that their own government had prevented them from playing an effective role in the Palestinian war.³⁰³

Two other events which most likely also reinforced the determination of Iraqi officers to remove the regime in Baghdad were the so-called wathba—the Leap—of 1948, and the intifadha—the uprising—of November 1952.³⁰⁴ The first event had been sparked by the extremely unpopular Anglo-Iraqi Portsmouth Agreement, signed on January 15, 1948, and by the government's rejection of the opposition's demands for civil liberties and changes in the electoral system which would guarantee free and direct elections.³⁰⁵ Interestingly enough, even in a crisis which was caused by domestic factors, such as the

contemplating the problem of rescuing their country and ridding it of British influence, but that they had shrunk from taking steps to translate their ideas into action, Farhan, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, p. 41. He is thus one of several authors and former members of the Free Officers movement who consider Sirri the founder of the organization.

³⁰² Dann, Iraq Under Qassem, p. 19; Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 773; Ghalib, Qissat Thawrat 14 Tammuz, pp. 12-13; Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki fi al-Iraq, p. 63; Farhan, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, 1978, p. 41.

³⁰³ Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, p. 62. Batatu appears to concur in this assessment, arguing that the Iraqi troops were inactive during October-December of 1948 when Israeli and Egyptian units were engaged in intensive fighting, Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 766.

³⁰⁴ Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, pp. 60-61

³⁰⁵ Batatu, The Old Social Classes, pp. 550-551, 666-667. The military government's decision to discontinue cooperation with the Baghdad Pact following July 14, 1958, testifies to the fact that Iraq's military did not approve of the country's relations with the West. Furthermore, the Free Officers contacts with political leaders prior to the July 14 coup are evidence that the former advocated popular political participation in the new government and took interest in domestic political developments, Khadduri, Republican Iraq, pp. 30-31; Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 803. Also, the fact that most Iraqi officers had a social background in the middle class or the lower middle class suggests that they shared the concerns of ordinary Iraqis, Khadduri, Republican Iraq, p. 18; Batatu, The Old Social Classes, pp. 764-765.

intifadha, an international element was also present as demonstrated by the burning of the American Information Office in Baghdad during the November riots, which was most likely an expression of resentment at U.S. support for Israel.³⁰⁶

The wathba erupted in January of 1948 after the Iraqi government had held a meeting without inviting the opposition to discuss the Portsmouth Treaty, which Prime Minister Salih Jabr had gone to London to negotiate. Demonstrations in early January against the treaty were ignored and it was signed in Portsmouth on January 15 by the two governments. This event was followed by two bloody demonstrations later the same month, during which many protesters were killed when the police opened fire to disperse the crowds. The wathba brought down the Jabr government and prevented the Treaty's ratification by the Iraqi parliament.³⁰⁷

From an Iraqi perspective, two other milestones in Middle East history must be viewed in the context of the wathba and the intifadha—the loss of Palestine, the nakba, and the Egyptian Revolution of July 1952. Both these events stirred up popular passions in the Arab world, the former because it was seen by the Arabs as a disaster, and the latter due to its pan-Arab implications. In a sense, developments of 1948 and 1952 strengthened the sentiments of unity and a common destiny in the Arab world, at least among intellectuals and military officers.

In 1955 and 1956 external events again acted as a catalyst for anti-British and anti-regime sentiments in Iraq both among civilians and military officers. Their country acceded to the Baghdad Pact in February of 1955 despite domestic opposition.³⁰⁸ This was regarded by the Iraqi public as just another attempt by Britain to perpetuate its

³⁰⁶ Marr, The Modern History of Iraq, p. 112.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., pp.102-103.

³⁰⁸ Batatu, The Old Classes, p.766.

influence in Iraq and achieve through the Pact what London had failed to realize with the rejected Portsmouth Agreement of 1948.³⁰⁹ Gamal 'Abdul Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal on July 26, 1956 also contributed to a rise in nationalist sentiments in the Arab world, which in turn translated into the forming of new Iraqi Free Officers cells in the army and air force.³¹⁰ The intensely anti-Hashimite and anti-Nuri broadcasts of the Cairo-based radio station Sawt al-'Arab played an important role in confirming the Iraqi public's suspicions about the new military alliance as well.³¹¹ The reaction of military officers to these events again suggests that they took a keen interest in political developments in Iraq and largely shared the sentiments of Iraqi intellectuals with regard to the policies of the regime.

The event which was most detrimental to the regime's pro-British policies, however, was the Suez Crisis of November 1956.³¹² The Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt made it very difficult for Nuri to justify Iraq's close ties with Britain: A nation which was Iraq's partner in the Baghdad Pact, the goal of whose purported policy was to defend the Middle East against Soviet expansion, had itself proved guilty of the very same aggression which it claimed threatened the region from its northern neighbor. The fact that an Arab country was allied to a Western power which had attacked the Arab umma, nation, was simply unacceptable to Iraqi and Arab opinion, and demonstrated how wide a chasm separated the regime from the Iraqi people.

³⁰⁹ A quotation from Fadhil Husain's Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki illustrates these sentiments: "The Baghdad Pact transformed all of Iraq into a British air base and put Iraq's independence in the irons of imperialism," Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, p. 62

³¹⁰ Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 774. 'Abd al-Majid successfully organized new cells at four military camps.

³¹¹ Marr, The Modern History of Iraq, pp. 153-154.

³¹² Batatu writes: "The attack upon Egypt in the autumn of 1956 by the English in league with the Israelis put Nuri and the regime he epitomized further out of countenance," Batatu, The Old Classes, p. 766; Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, p. 62.

Partly as a result of developments in the mid-1950s a tendency towards proliferation and merging of Free Officers cells became pronounced. In November of 1956 ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim was stationed in Jordan, where he had been dispatched with Iraqi units to assist the Jordanian army in the event of an Israeli attack during the Suez Crisis. In protest against Iraqi policies at the time, Qasim had informed Syrian army units, which were stationed in Jordan for the same purpose as the Iraqis, that he would not use his troops against Syria. He had also confided in his subordinate, ‘Abd al-Salam Muhammad ‘Arif, that he had formed an organization, the purpose of which was to overthrow the Iraqi regime.³¹³ Also, there are indications that two major Free Officer groups merged during the Suez Crisis. One, including prominent Free Officers such as Rif‘at al-Hajj Sirri and Nazim al-Tabaqchali, had been joined by the end of 1954 by Qasim’s group. The other major cell led by Brigadiers Muhyi al-Din ‘Abd al-Hamid and Naji Talib, and including other prominent Free Officers such as Lieutenant Colonel ‘Abd al-Karim Farhan and Lieutenant Colonel Wasfi Tahir had been formed early in 1956.³¹⁴ These two main groups had merged during the Suez Crisis at which time Qasim had been elected “to preside over the central committee of Free Officers which led the united movement.”³¹⁵ Also, the large number of new members who joined the movement at this time is ample evidence of the widespread frustration with Nuri’s regime in the armed forces.³¹⁶

³¹³ Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, pp. 64-65.

³¹⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Farhan’s work on the Free Officers movement is one of the Arabic-language primary sources this dissertation has drawn upon.

³¹⁵ Dann, Iraq Under Qassem, p. 20. Ghalib, however, himself a free officer, claims that Qasim was invited to join the movement in March of 1956, Ghalib, Qissat Thawrat 14 Tammuz, p. 22.

³¹⁶ Within one year eighty junior officers had joined the movement. These junior members of the movement had their own leading committee consisting of nine members. This committee became a contingency committee, the task of which was to step in to lead the revolutionary struggle should the Supreme Committee be arrested or fail in its mission, Batatu, The Old Social Classes, pp. 788-789

Organizational Structure

Once the Free Officers had elected a Supreme Committee consisting of fourteen members and invited Qasim to chair its meetings the movement was given a firmer organizational structure, although this did not necessarily translate into a more centralized manner of operation.³¹⁷ The Supreme Committee made several decisions which appeared on the surface to aim at increased centralization, but individual officers often disregarded these decisions and acted on their own. Other decisions seem to have been implemented more scrupulously. Thus, e.g., the Committee agreed upon that each committee member organize other officers in a network of cells, each consisting of three-five officers who were to maintain contact with the Committee or other cells through one of the members of each individual cell. Individual cells had no knowledge of membership or activities of other cells.³¹⁸ Furthermore, sub-committees were created to deal with issues such as planning, propaganda and organization, collection of information, and financial matters.³¹⁹ The structure of the movement thus resembled that of a secret organization, but without a strictly implemented discipline and hierarchy at the top.

Scholars and Free Officers are at variance over how the chairman of the Supreme Committee was elected and what his role was originally intended to be. This issue is of great import for the understanding of developments after the July Revolution. According to one version, the Committee agreed that Qasim chair its meetings by force of his

³¹⁷ Khadduri claims that membership did not exceed fourteen, Khadduri, Republican Iraq, p. 17. Batatu lists fifteen members, including Rif'at al-Hajj Sirri, Batatu, The Old Social Classes, pp. 778-782. Phebe Marr lists the following members: Muhyi al-Din 'Abd al-Hamid, Naji Talib, 'Abd al-Wahhab Amin, Muhsin Husain al-Habib, Tahir Yahya, Rajab 'Abd AL-Majid, 'Abd al-Karim Farhan, Wasfi Tahir, Sabih 'Ali Ghalib, Muhammad Sab', 'Abd al-Karim Qasim, 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif, 'Abd al-Rahman 'Arif, and 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Shawwaf, Marr, The Modern History of Iraq, p. 326.

³¹⁸ Ghalib, Qissat Thawrat 14 Tammuz, p. 23; Khadduri, Republican Iraq, p. 17.

³¹⁹ Ghalib, Qissat Thawrat 14 Tammuz, p. 23.

seniority with respect to his service.³²⁰ His intended function on the Supreme Committee appears to have been that of a primus inter pares. The different interpretations of the role assigned to Qasim, and the deteriorating relations between him and the Supreme Committee's secretary, Engineer Lieutenant Colonel Rajab 'Abd al-Majid, even led to an unsuccessful attempt by the latter to have Qasim replaced with Naji Talib.³²¹ According to another account, however, one officer suggested at a S.C. meeting that the leadership issue be discussed, whereupon two proposals were submitted for a vote. One proposal advocated collective leadership of the Supreme Committee, while the other favored the role of a chairman of the Committee. The proposals were discussed and it was decided that the latter was preferable. Upon this, three candidates were nominated for the post, Brigadier 'Abd al-Karim Qasim, Colonel Muhyi al-Din 'Abd al-Hamid, and Colonel Naji Talib. Qasim was elected chairman by force of his position as the oldest officer on the Committee, and in accordance with the military protocol of the organization.³²² The different accounts of Qasim's role on the Supreme Committee clearly suggest that he lacked the authority of a Sole Leader, his preferred title used by the press after July 14, 1958.

From the outset one of the major concerns of the Supreme Committee was secrecy. Meetings therefore took place in the guise of dinner parties or regular visits in the houses of individual members. All S.C. members were rarely present at any one of these meetings. As a result of the need for complete secrecy the Committee maintained no

³²⁰ His chairmanship of the Committee, however, was not tantamount to leading the revolution or the country, which was the position Qasim took at least shortly prior to and also after the revolution.

³²¹ Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, pp. 67-68; Dann argues that Qasim took over the planning of the revolution at an early stage assisted by 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif. At the same time, however, his leadership role was far from uncontested, setting him apart from the role Gamal 'Abdul Nasser had played in the Egyptian revolution of 1952, Dann, Iraq Under Qassem, p. 19.

³²² Muhyi al-Din 'Abd al-Hamid, and Colonel Naji Talib were elected vice chairmen, and Rajab 'Abd al-Majid secretary of the Supreme Committee Ghalib, Qissat Thawrat 14 Tammuz, pp. 22-23.

records of the names of the Free Officers.³²³ Fortunately for the Free Officers their clandestine activities were facilitated by the Free Officers cell active in the Directorate of Military Intelligence, which provided crucial information to the movement.³²⁴

Social Background and Political Affiliations

A brief discussion of the social background of the Free Officers on the Supreme Committee and their political and religious affiliations will shed light on why they shared the sentiments of ordinary Iraqis and to what extent they were representative of the armed forces at large.

Most Supreme Committee members did not come from wealthy families. Of the fourteen members all but one, Naji Talib whose father was a wealthy landowner, came from families who lived in relatively modest circumstances. Most officers had grown up in Baghdad, and only Talib, Farhan, and Tahir Yahya were born outside Baghdad. The social background of the majority of the S.C. members reflected the officer corps in general, most of which came from middle-class or lower middle-class background. All Committee officers except Naji Talib and Muhsin Husain al-Habib were Arab Sunni. Talib and al-Habib were Shi'is. Qasim whose mother was a Shi'i, grew up in a mixed Sunni-Shi'i family. The number of Kurds (none) and Arab Shi'is (two) on the Committee reflected the small number of these two groups in the officer corps in general, in particular in the higher ranks. The admission of Kurds into the Staff College had been

³²³ Rajab 'Abd al-Majid informed Fadhil Husain that he, contrary to the decision of the Supreme Committee, had maintained lists of the Free Officers, and that they numbered 203, Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, p. 68. Majid Khadduri states that according to his sources the Free Officers numbered between 172 and 300, Khadduri, Republican Iraq, p. 17. Dann quotes a source according to which the number of Free Officers was approximately 150, (anonymous), Majzarat al-Rihab (Bairut: 1960), p. 42, referred to in Dann, Iraq Under Qassem, p. 20.

³²⁴ Ghalib, Qissat Thawrat 14 Tammuz, pp. 38-39.

greatly reduced since the Kurdish rebellion in the mid-1940s.³²⁵ The religious affiliation of the Supreme Committee reflected that of the army at large but not of the Iraqi population, the majority of which were Shi'is. Furthermore, the fact that a majority of the Committee officers lived in the capital did not reflect the reality that most Iraqis did not live in Baghdad. On the other hand, they were representative of those who carried out the revolution, since it took place in the capital. More importantly, however, despite the fact that the Supreme Committee members did not represent the Iraqis in several respects, they were representative of the population at large, since they did not belong to the wealthy families who ruled and controlled the country.

With respect to their political affiliations, the Supreme Committee officers were nationalists of one shade or another. Scholars term Rif'at al-Hajj Sirri, Naji Talib, Rajab 'Abd al-Majid, Muhsin Husain al-Habib, 'Abd al-Karim Farhan, 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Amin, Tahir Yahya, 'Abd al-Rahman 'Arif, and Muhammad Sab' nationalists. Wasfi Tahir and Sabih 'Ali Ghalib had communist leanings, and 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Shawwaf and Muhyi al-Din 'Abd al-Hamid leaned towards the moderate socialists, the National Democratic Party. 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif was a pan-Arab nationalist with strong religious convictions, advocating union with the United Arab Republic. Qasim was influenced by the National Democratic Party's political program. Neither he nor Muhyi al-Din 'Abd al-Hamid, however, embraced pan-Arabism. Isma'il 'Ali was influenced by communist ideas and Salih Mahdi 'Ammash displayed Ba'thist leanings. Sirri, who was not on the Supreme Committee due to the authorities' suspicions regarding his political views, and Rajab 'Abd al-Majid strongly espoused pan-Arabism. The former also leaned towards

³²⁵ Khadduri, Republican Iraq, p. 18; Batatu, The Old Social Classes, pp. 764-765.

conservative ideas and Islam. The concept of an Islamically based pan-Arabism was common among Sirri's associates, such as Nazim al-Tabaqchali.³²⁶ The circumstance that the Free Officers were fervent nationalists, however, did not facilitate unanimity, since they espoused other ideologies at the same time.

The array of political ideologies on the Supreme Committee represented a potential recipe for future disaster. Nevertheless, it was a true reflection of the diverse political landscape in Iraqi society and in this sense it faithfully mirrored popular sentiments in the country. The reason that the Free Officers were able to reach a certain degree of consensus despite profound differences is that no one exercised real power. The situation changed radically with Qasim's self-proclaimed role as "Sole Leader" following the revolution. Most likely he had this role in mind for himself shortly prior to the July 14 coup, when he realized that he or his subordinate co-conspirators would command the units which could enter Baghdad, and most likely much earlier than that, while awaiting an auspicious moment to strike. This conclusion is based on the fact that he concealed his coup plans from most of his fellow Free Officers.

Contacts with Political Leaders

The need for strict secrecy meant that information about the Free Officers' activities was principally restricted to the Supreme Committee and that external contacts must be kept to a minimum in order to reduce the risk of exposing the movement to the regime's

³²⁶ Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, p. 66; Khadduri, Republican Iraq, pp. 18 and 30; Batatu, The Old Social Classes, pp. 771-772; Marr, The Modern History of Iraq, p. 326. Husain does not paint a very flattering portrait of Qasim, dismissing him as an opportunist who would adjust his ideology to the audience he was addressing at any particular moment. Conversely, Khadduri argues that Qasim and 'Abd al-Hamid were liberal nationalists in favor of democratic institutions, whereas 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif did not display any particular interest in such institutions, Khadduri, Republican Iraq, p. 30. Caractacus contends that many officers shared strong Islamic views and that this fact was manifested after July 14 in regulations restricting the sale of alcohol and gambling, Caractacus (Norman Daniel), Revolution in Iraq, p. 149.

intelligence network. Information about what was going on within the movement was also at times withheld by certain Committee members from other Committee officers. The reason for this was the disregard of individual officers of Supreme Committee decisions which they themselves had voted to implement. The Supreme Committee had decided on the first day of its existence to ban all contacts between the Free Officers and civilians. It did not take long for the Committee to realize, however, that its decision would have proven counter-productive had it been enforced, due to communist and Ba‘thist activities among military officers.³²⁷ The Supreme Committee was concerned about these civilian activities, since they posed a security threat for at least two reasons: civilians were not proficient in the art of conspiracy, and they did not know whether the military officers they cultivated were trustworthy.³²⁸ Most likely there was one more reason for the Committee’s concern about these contacts, possibly of equal significance as the two mentioned above: namely, that they took place outside the control of the Free Officers since they were initiated by political organizations and not by the Officers themselves. The contacts were therefore incompatible with the role of the Committee, which was to plan and carry out a coup and a revolution.

As a result of the Supreme Committee’s concerns about the activities of civilian political organizations in the officer corps it asked that these activities be suspended. The organizations in question complied, but the Committee denied the request of the Front of National Union that one of its members be allowed to attend S.C. meetings. In early

³²⁷ Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 794. Rajab ‘Abd al-Majid warned civilians against contacts with some officers, Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, p. 73. Furthermore, a number of prominent members of the Istiqlal Party cultivated certain officers. Finally, when several opposition parties formed the Front of National Union in 1957 the contacts between civilians and the military increased.

³²⁸ Ibid. The contacts referred to naturally had the potential of facilitating the regime’s surveillance of both the civilian and military opposition and increased the possibility that the regime would sooner or later be successful in eliminating or at least seriously impeding the activities of the Free Officers movement.

1958, however, the Committee and the Front agreed that contacts be initiated on the basis of necessity and that these contacts take place between Colonel Rajab ‘Abd al-Majid, secretary of the Supreme Committee, and Siddiq Shanshal on behalf of the Front. Qasim did not regard himself bound by this agreement and maintained connections with both the Communist Party of Iraq and the National Democratic Party. He met on several occasions in the months before the July 14 coup with Kamal ‘Umar Nazimi, Communist member of the Supreme National Committee of the Front of National Union, without informing the Free Officers Supreme Committee of these meetings.³²⁹ It is quite possible that the “private” contacts of certain officers with civilian leaders reflect the existence of personal agendas among these officers.

Contacts between Free Officers and politicians had been initiated as early as 1953, when Rif‘at al-Hajj Sirri sought the counsel of Siddiq Shanshal, Secretary of the Istiqlal Party, and attempted through Shanshal to persuade other politicians to cooperate with him, that is Sirri. Shanshal had tried to dissuade him from undertaking such a venture, but Sirri had then turned to Fa’iq al-Samarra’i, vice-president of the Istiqlal Party, who had agreed to provide advice to Sirri. At the same time Mahdi Kubba, leader of the same party, also maintained connections with other Free Officers.³³⁰ Fa’iq al-Samarra’i’s contacts with the Free Officers also date back to 1953. Over the years he had met with Sirri, Rajab ‘Abd al-Majid, and other officers, providing advice to them. During the contacts al-Samarra’i prepared a draft for an agrarian reform law to be announced after the coup, and also suggested that a Sovereignty Council be formed.³³¹ The fact that the purpose of several of the contacts with party leaders was of a consultative nature suggests

³²⁹ Batatu, The Old Social Classes, pp. 793-794; Khadduri, Republican Iraq, pp.31-32.

³³⁰ Khadduri, Republican Iraq, pp. 30-31.

³³¹ Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, p. 73.

that the Supreme Committee were preparing an action program for the future and were soliciting advice in areas where they possessed no expertise.

Qasim's willingness to take the risk of meeting Kamal 'Umar Nazimi, suggests that he attributed great value to these personal contacts with the communist leader. This is also confirmed by the fact that the Supreme Committee chairman took Nazimi into his confidence on July 11 regarding the exact date of the coup, while withholding this important piece of information from his fellow Free Officers on the Committee. Siddiq Shanshal, the secretary of the Istiqlal Party and the Ba'thist leader Fu'ad al-Rikabi received the same information.³³² Qasim's friend Rashid Mutlaq, on behalf of the former, had also approached Husain Jamil, secretary of the National Democratic Party, in October of 1956, right before the tripartite attack on Egypt, and conveyed to him that Qasim wished Jamil to form the first civilian government after the revolution. The latter had excused himself, however, since he did not wish to "be a tool in the hands of the military."³³³ According to another account, Mutlaq had conveyed to Jamil that Qasim wanted him to cooperate with the army, which planned to carry out a revolution and then hand over power to the political opposition. Jamil had declined to get involved and had suggested that Mutlaq contact the party's leader, Kamil al-Chadirchi instead.³³⁴ Rajab 'Abd al-Majid in his capacity of secretary of the Supreme Committee also maintained contacts with several nationalist leaders such as Siddiq Shanshal, Fa'iq al-Samarra'i, and

³³² Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, p. 803.

³³³ Fadhil Husain, *Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki*, p.74.

³³⁴ Qasim had kept in touch with Muhammad Hadid, the vice-president of the party, for two years, and the latter had in turn kept al-Chadirchi posted. Al-Chadirchi was in prison at the time of these contacts, Khadduri, *Republican Iraq*, pp. 31-32. If the second version of Mutlaq's activities is correct, it suggests that Qasim must have had a fundamental change of heart some time between October 1956 and July 1958 regarding who should exercise supreme power.

Muhammad Mahdi Kubba.³³⁵ Qasim's secret contacts with party leaders suggest that he thought these were more important for his plans than his fellow officers or that he placed more trust in these civilians than in his potential military rivals, or both.

The civil-military contacts revealed differences between the two parties with regard to the question of what tactic should be adopted for the revolution. The civilians advocated organizing demonstrations in preparation of an army coup, while the Free Officers favored a coup with simultaneous manifestations of popular support.³³⁶ This shows that the military and civilian opposition had different assessments of the ability of the political organizations to effect an overthrow of the regime. The Free Officers obviously believed that the political organizations could only initiate a revolution if they acted in unison and simultaneously with army units controlled by the Free Officers. The military revolutionaries had indubitably arrived at this conclusion based on two previous instances of the tactic advocated by the civilians. The Officers had contacted one of the communist leaders, Zaki Khairi, in order to incite demonstrations which would serve as a pretext for the army to enter Baghdad and thus provide an opportunity to carry out a coup. Two minor demonstrations were organized, but both were easily suppressed by the police.³³⁷ It was most likely due to the fear of a repetition of this failure and the obvious weakness of the popular forces that the Free Officers insisted on a tactic which emphasized simultaneous popular support for a military-led operation.

It appears that some of the civilians who knew of the Free Officers movement in turn conveyed this information to non-Iraqi politicians abroad.³³⁸ One non-Iraqi politician

³³⁵ Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, pp. 73.

³³⁶ Ghalib, Qissat Thawrat 14 Tammuz, p. 27.

³³⁷ Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, p.74.

³³⁸ Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, p.74.

who claimed that he had been aware of the Free Officers' plan to topple the regime prior to July 14 was the Syrian Ba'thist leader Michel 'Aflaq, who conveyed this piece of information to the Japanese consul general in Damascus. Considering the close ties between the Iraqi and Syrian Ba'th parties, and the Iraqi Ba'th leader Fu'ad al-Rikabi's knowledge of the coup plans, this claim appears quite plausible.³³⁹ Also, Siddiq Shanshal allegedly informed President Nasser personally of the existence of the Free Officers movement during a visit to Cairo in 1957.³⁴⁰ Furthermore, Qasim himself, while stationed in Jordan, had informed Jordanian and Syrian officers of the existence of his organization.³⁴¹ He had also via a friend asked National Democratic Party secretary Husain Jamil to solicit Nasser's view in July of 1957 about the possibility of foreign military intervention in the event of a revolution in Iraq. Nasser believed that neither the Western powers nor the Baghdad Pact, nor Jordan would intervene, should a revolution take place in Iraq.³⁴² It appears remarkable that despite the fact that several Iraqi and non-Iraqi civilians knew of the Free Officers movement, the Iraqi government was not in possession of much intelligence regarding the Officers' plans.

It is worth mention with regard to the contacts described in the above paragraph that the Supreme Committee had made no decision to sanction contacts with foreign nationals, not even non-Iraqi Arabs. Interestingly enough, one source claims that the

³³⁹ Consul General Damascus Parker T. Hart to the Secretary of State, August 10, 1958, 787.00/8-1058.

³⁴⁰ Khadduri, Republican Iraq, pp. 35-36, footnote 58. Nasser reportedly committed himself to unreserved support for the Iraqi revolution, and also conveyed to Shanshal a promise by the Soviet ambassador in Cairo to the effect that the Soviet Union would support the Iraqis as it had supported Egypt during the Suez Crisis of 1956, Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 795. It is not clear, however, whether the U.S.S.R. would have been prepared to threaten a Western aggressor with missiles, as had been the case during the Suez Crisis.

³⁴¹ Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, p. 74.

³⁴² Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, pp. 73-74. Qasim's soundings in Cairo about the possibility of a foreign intervention corroborate the claim made above that such a reaction from the Western powers was of great concern to him.

leaders of the United Arab Republic knew of the Free Officers movement, but had no detailed information on it.³⁴³ The explanation is most likely that the Supreme Committee members were reticent with the civilians they met with about detailed information on plans, other activities, and names which could have seriously compromised the movement. One can thus conclude with confidence that non-Iraqis were not in possession of better intelligence than the Iraqi civilians with whom they met. Finally, the lure of establishing a spurious connection with a historical event of such magnitude as the Iraqi Revolution was probably irresistible to many individuals.

Political Program and Division

For reasons of secrecy the Supreme Committee had decided not to keep records of who attended its meetings and what was discussed. Not surprisingly, however, one of the officers, Staff Colonel ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Amin decided to ignore this decision and kept diaries in which he recorded who had been present and what issues had been discussed when the Committee convened. Al-Amin’s diary reveals that the Supreme Committee focused on the following issues in particular: The establishing of (a) an Iraqi Republic based on parliamentary democracy; (b) a Revolutionary Command Council after the revolution; and (c) a transitional period with a civilian provisional government supervised by the Revolutionary Command Council. Furthermore, the Free Officers had agreed that no officer was to be a minister in the civilian government, belong to a political party, and that political agitation in the armed forces would be banned. They had, however, made no decision on whom to nominate to head the future government. The Free Officers had also agreed upon setting up a provisional Sovereignty Council with three members, holding

³⁴³ Ghalib, Qissat Thawrat 14 Tammuz, p. 30.

elections to a national assembly during the transitional period, framing a constitution, and electing a president of the republic. The Supreme Committee was also agreed that the Revolutionary Command Council be dissolved after the transitional period, and that Free Officers who wished to engage in politics retire from the army.³⁴⁴ Several of these decisions were ignored by Qasim after the July 14 coup.

An issue which was of particular concern to the Supreme Committee was how foreign powers, especially members of the Baghdad Pact, would react to a revolution in Iraq. The Committee also feared that a negative Western reaction could have a detrimental impact on Iraq's economy due to the Iraqi dinar's link to the pound sterling and the country's dependence on oil revenues. In general the Free Officers opposed Iraq's close ties with the West and wished to replace this policy with positive neutralism and a foreign policy based on the principles of the Bandung Conference of 1955, and the charters of the Arab League and the United Nations. Also, the Committee agreed that an agrarian reform law and the abolition of feudalism were necessary, and that poverty, ignorance, and disease must be eliminated.³⁴⁵ The generality of the social program most likely reflects the officers' lack of expertise in non-military affairs and their intention to let the politicians they were in contact with weigh in on these matters, or simply to let the future civilian government address these issues. The absence of a clear decision on the Baghdad Pact suggests a wish not to complicate relations with the West unduly. The controversial issue of the Baghdad Pact had a great symbolic value in Iraq owing to the strong opposition to the Pact from many quarters of Iraqi society. Not making a decision was most likely a

³⁴⁴ Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, pp. 68 and 72; Khadduri, Republican Iraq, pp. 35-36; also, see Batatu, The Old Social Classes, pp. 795-796, whose source is the unpublished reminiscences of Engineer Colonel Rajab 'Abd al-Majid; Farhan, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, pp. 65-66.

³⁴⁵ Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, pp. 70-71.

wise approach, since the situation after the coup could be expected to be unclear for some time.³⁴⁶

The question of union with the United Arab Republic, which became the most divisive issue after July 14, was handled in a surprisingly diplomatic manner by the Supreme Committee. The Committee did not make a decision with regard to immediate accession to the United Arab Republic. As a result of the concern about foreign intervention, however, the Committee was agreed that Iraq would join the Arab Republic if the revolution came under threat, but the decision does not appear to have translated into any requests for external support for the movement prior to the revolution.³⁴⁷ This decision suggests that the issue could have been handled differently after the revolution. The Free Officers could have agreed upon a formula which would have satisfied both pan-Arabists and Iraqi nationalists. Such a solution could have envisioned a referendum, a federation with the United Arab Republic, or some temporary form of close cooperation awaiting a later decision. Had the Committee reached a compromise instead of leaving the field open to violent rivalries after the coup, the rebellions which followed might have been averted.

Given the deep divisions among the Free Officers, a certain skepticism is justified with regard to their ability to rally around a united program. The political, social, and economic program they formulated was not adequate to serve as a basis for the future revolutionary state due to its lack of specificity. Conversely, the program's usefulness lay in its generality, because this quality enabled the Free Officers to maintain some

³⁴⁶ A decision to immediately announce Iraq's withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact following the coup could prove to have been precipitous with respect to Western reactions. If the revolutionaries delayed such an announcement, it would give them an opportunity to take steps to reassure Britain and the United States.

³⁴⁷ Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, p. 72; Khadduri, Republican Iraq, pp. 35-36; also, see Batatu, The Old Social Classes, pp. 795; this conditional union with the U.A.R. was proposed by Naji Talib.

semblance of unity. The key to the usefulness of the Free Officers' program was that it focused exclusively on issues upon which the officers were more or less agreed, without stating in detail their plans for a revolutionary society. The great disadvantage of this approach was that every Supreme Committee member read his own ideas into the program, a fact which would later prove to have far-reaching consequences.

The circumstance that the Free Officers constituted a politically very diverse and loosely organized movement sometimes led to friction among them with respect to tactics, political program, and authority within the movement. One example of such division is the group of junior officers who joined the organization in November of 1957. Their leading committee served as a committee-in-reserve of the Free Officers.³⁴⁸ In late 1957 the committee requested that three of its members be allowed to attend Supreme Committee meetings but, this wish was not granted. Under the circumstances, such a request was fully legitimate, since the committee's task was to lead the movement in the event of the arrest of the Supreme Committee. The junior officers must have argued that they would not be able to fulfill this function if they were not informed about the activities of the Committee. Another instance of friction between the two committees occurred in the middle of 1958 when the junior officers' committee went as far as to threaten to break off relations with the Supreme Committee due to frustration with what was perceived as lack of progress with respect to initiating the revolution, and alleged excessive caution on the part of the Committee. The latter, for its part, regarded the junior officers as too impatient and was concerned that this attitude could jeopardize the

³⁴⁸ See footnote 316 above.

revolution. It is quite possible that this impatience with the Committee's leadership played a major part in its decision not to allow junior officers to attend its meetings.

Impatience, impulsiveness, and irascibility were not characteristics of the junior officers only. 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif's inclination towards rash action was demonstrated when he at a meeting of the Supreme Committee held on a Thursday suggested that the revolution be carried out on the following Saturday.³⁴⁹ Naji Talib, who had attended the meeting, later recalled that he and most other officers had protested and warned that they would not participate in such an enterprise. Naji Talib, Muhyi al-Din 'Abd al-Hamid, and 'Abd al-Wahhab Amin, had offered their resignation but had withdrawn their offers under pressure from colleagues on the Supreme Committee.³⁵⁰ There was also friction between cells and the Committee.³⁵¹ The friction was the greatest, however, between 'Abd al-Karim Qasim and Rajab 'Abd al-Majid. The lack of personal chemistry between the two men had once been witnessed by Naji Talib at a dinner party and resulted in such a heated debate that both men had left the event without touching the food. The fact that this incident occurred at their last meeting before the July 14 coup is a clear indication that the Revolution was not destined to be a smooth endeavor.³⁵² Another serious rival of Qasim's was 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Shawwaf who had insisted on carrying out his own plot in May 1958, but he seems to have been dissuaded by Qasim because the latter had realized that the leadership of the movement would pass to al-Shawwaf if he was

³⁴⁹ Qasim's co-conspirator.

³⁵⁰ Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 797.

³⁵¹ In one particular case such differences had prompted the S.C. representative Rajab 'Abd al-Majid to refuse to continue working with the recalcitrant cell, whereupon he had been replaced by 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif Mahakamat al-Mahkama al-'Askariyya al-'Ulya al-Khasa [Proceedings of the Supreme Special Military Court], v, p. 338, referred to in Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, p. 76.

³⁵² Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, p. 76, as recounted to Husain by Naji Talib.

successful.³⁵³ Likewise, it is possible that Qasim offered Naji Talib a seat on the Sovereignty Council in order to eliminate him as a rival for power, since Talib would not have retained his position in the army had he accepted Qasim's offer.³⁵⁴

The friction described above suggests an ongoing power struggle within the movement at different levels: between senior and junior officers, between the Supreme Committee and other Free Officers, between factions on the Committee, and among individuals on the Supreme Committee. One can further conclude from the evidence presented that the profound divisions within the ranks of the Free Officers originated in ideological and tactical differences, with the result being a struggle for influence and control over the movement in order to prevent rival factions and individual officers from making certain important decisions. As a consequence, there was no one overarching plan to carry out the July 14 coup, but several competing plots presented by different groups with the tacit understanding that if one group was successful the others would support it.³⁵⁵

There are different accounts as to how many aborted coup attempts and abandoned plans there were prior to July 14, 1958, with different sources enumerating between three and eleven. According to one source, the first plan had been presented in the winter of 1956 by Rif'at al-Hajj Sirri, who had asked another officer to convey to 'Abd al-Karim Qasim that the Free Officers wanted to use his brigade for the task of occupying Baghdad upon his return from Jordan, where he was stationed with his unit during the Suez Crisis. The Free Officers were prepared to join the brigade when it approached Baghdad or its camp in the vicinity of the city. Qasim had declined to participate in this scheme,

³⁵³ Khadduri, Republican Iraq, p. 35.

³⁵⁴ Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, p. 71.

³⁵⁵ Khadduri, Republican Iraq, pp. 34-35.

however, and it had come to naught.³⁵⁶ It is possible that Qasim decided against the plot, since he would not be in complete control of its execution due to the involvement of other leading Free Officers. The second plan, Qasim's own, had been aborted.³⁵⁷ The third plan was to have been executed in 1957 during the army's annually held large-scale military training exercise at the end of the year. The exercise was scheduled to take place in November in the Rawanduz area in northern Iraq, and the King, Crown Prince, and high government officials were to attend a conference at the end of the maneuver. The plan was to assassinate the aforementioned individuals at the conference.³⁵⁸

At least one plan could have led to considerable loss of life, had it been carried out. The fourth attempt to overthrow the regime was to have taken place on Army Day, January 6, 1958 with the King, Crown Prince, and Nuri present at the celebrations at Camp al-Rashid. The Supreme Committee had studied this opportunity and Qasim had presented a plan, which briefly consisted in having two tanks open fire on the dignitaries on the raised platform. A majority of the Supreme Committee had rejected the plan due to the numerous risks involved and the great likelihood of loss of innocent lives. Another reason for the rejection had been that the Committee had previously opposed the assassination of the King. Naji Talib had then proposed a plan in lieu of Qasim's, according to which an armored battalion under the command of Staff Colonel 'Abd al-Rahman 'Arif was to encircle Rihab Palace, the radio station, and assume control over the

³⁵⁶ Farhan, *Thawrat 14 Tammuz*, p. 21. Furthermore, he would not be able to take credit for the plan, since Sirri was its author. A less conspiratorial interpretation is that Qasim rejected Sirri's plan because he had his own plan. The former had informed the Supreme Committee that he planned to strike against King Faisal II, Crown Prince 'Abd al-Ilah, and Prime Minister Nuri who were expected to receive the troops on the Iraqi side of the border when Qasim crossed into Iraq from Jordan. The plot had been called off, however, when Qasim had learned that Nuri would not attend the event, Khadduri, *Republican Iraq*, p. 34.

³⁵⁷ Farhan, *Thawrat 14 Tammuz*, p. 21. Farhan does not provide more details on this plot and neither does any other work consulted for this dissertation.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

bridges across the Tigris River, and announce the revolution, whereupon the units stationed at Camp al-Rashid were to march on Baghdad. The battalion in question left Abu Ghuraib every morning for parade practice at Camp al-Rashid and would therefore not raise suspicion. Talib's plan was, however, rejected as well, and the parade took place as intended.³⁵⁹ It is clear from the Supreme Committee's rejection of Qasim's plan that a majority of its members did not condone indiscriminate taking of life.

The sixth plan was to have taken advantage of the return of army units to their camps after the completion of a large-scale military maneuver in Rutba. The 15th infantry brigade had reached Abu Ghuraib at a distance of six miles from Baghdad and the plan was to use only one of its regiments under the command of Colonel 'Abd al-Ghani al-Rawi to act in concert with units in Baghdad. On the night between March 15 and 16 the Free Officers had met in separate groups. One group, including Sirri, had met at the home of Lieutenant Colonel Wasfi Tahir and another at the home of Colonel 'Abd al-Latif al-Darraji. Colonel al-Shawwaf had met at another house together with two other officers. After midnight a group of engineer officers had left for the engineer camp to take control of the warehouses. About three o'clock a.m. the news had arrived that al-Rawi had not been able to take action with his regiment owing to the absence of the regiment's officers. At this point many officers had demanded that the plan be executed without al-Rawi, but a majority had finally decided to abort the coup attempt.³⁶⁰ The seventh plot was to have been carried out on May 11 during maneuvers in al-Rutba, but had not taken place since Nuri al-Sa'id had not attended the exercise together with the King and the Crown Prince.

³⁵⁹ Farhan, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, pp. 62-63. Batatu claims that the plan had been abandoned because Colonel 'Abd al-Rahman 'Arif, commander of the main force in the plot—the Faisal Armored Regiment—had maintained that he did not have enough ammunition, and that he could not trust his subordinate officers, Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 797.

³⁶⁰ Ghalib, Qissat Thawrat 14 Tammuz, pp. 57-58; Farhan, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, p.63.

This plan reveals the Free Officers' emphasis on secrecy and the importance of the simultaneous presence in one location of the regime's three pillars.

According to the eighth plan the Basra Brigade under the command of Ahmad Muhammad Yahya was to have initiated a revolt during a stop at Abu Ghuraib en route from al-Rutba on May 12 with al-Shawwaf and other Free Officers taking action in Baghdad. Yahya had not started the revolt, however, and the Free Officers in Baghdad had not supported al-Shawwaf. It is possible that this plot had failed because of differences of opinion. Qasim is said to have discouraged al-Shawwaf from implementing his plan, since he had already designed his own plan for July 14. The ninth plot had been laid down by 'Abd al-Ghani al-Rawi and was to have been carried out in Baghdad on May 29 at the celebrations of the anniversary of the establishment of the Staff College. The Crown Prince and Nuri were to have been assassinated, but not the King who would have been used by the army to seize power. The plan had been rejected by a number of Free Officers as suicidal and had never been carried out.³⁶¹ It can be concluded from the

³⁶¹ Khadduri, Republican Iraq, pp. 34-35; Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, p. 78. Farhan gives the date of this plot as June 28, Farhan, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, p. 64. Ghalib concurs with Farhan as to the date, but credits Sirri with the authorship of the plan, Ghalib, Qissat Thawrat 14 Tammuz, p. 59. Neither Farhan nor Ghalib mentions the condition that the King was not to be hurt. Al-Zubaidi credits Sirri and al-Rawi with one plan each for carrying out a coup at the Staff College, giving the same date as Khadduri, al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz 1958, pp. 400-401. Sirri's plan was for a small group of armored personnel carriers belonging to an engineer unit stationed at Camp Abu Ghuraib to occupy key points in Baghdad such as the radio station, the Ministry of Defense, the electric power plant, the Royal Palace etc. Other armored personnel carriers were to surround the guests at the College and arrest them, after which the revolution would be announced on the radio. Sirri first traveled to Kirkuk and Mosul to mobilize Free Officer support in the north for his endeavor. Reassured of this support he returned to Baghdad but the plot was not carried out because neither Nuri nor 'Abd al-Ilah attended the celebration at the Staff College. Al-Rawi's plan was laid down with his fellow Free Officers in Basra and presented to the Supreme Committee. His plot aimed at the assassination of 'Abd al-Ilah and Nuri al-Sa'id, and the arrest of the King and the guests during the celebration at the Staff College by a group of Free Officers armed with pistols on a suicide mission. Other units under the command of Free Officers were to occupy key positions in the capital and announce the revolution, al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz 1958, pp. 400-401, Ghalib, Qissat Thawrat 14 Tammuz, pp. 59 and 62.

above that disagreements within the Supreme Committee at least in one case had led to an aborted coup attempt.

The Coup within the Coup

Like the discussions above of political affiliations, decisions made by the Supreme Committee, and the organizational structure of the Free Officers movement, an examination of the coup plans of the S.C. members is crucial to understanding post-revolutionary developments. A careful analysis of the different plans briefly described above will yield a number of conclusions about the personal relations among the Committee members, the manner in which they laid down their coup plans, the importance of the element of chance in these schemes, and the personality of the authors of the plots. For obvious reasons most coup plans focused on Baghdad, but in certain cases the support of officers in the North or South was solicited. This does not necessarily mean, however, that regional Free Officers were taken into the confidence of the Supreme Committee regarding the details of conspiracies, since the officers contacted appear to have been members of the Committee who for one reason or another were stationed outside Baghdad. Conversely, in the case of al-Rawi there are indications that a number of southern Free Officers had been informed of his plan, since they would assist him in executing it.

The fact that Qasim was the author of only two of the numerous plots prior to July 14, 1958 suggests that he was facing serious competition from other Free Officers for the leadership of the revolution; at least five other Supreme Committee members designed plans of their own for a coup. The normal procedure among the Committee Free Officers

was to design a plot, solicit support for it among other officers, and then submit the plan to the Supreme Committee for discussion. All coup plans appear to have been presented to the Committee for discussion except the one which succeeded on July 14. The answer to the question why this was not done in the case of the July 14 plot will most likely contribute to shedding light on developments after July 14. It is quite possible that Qasim had made up his mind as early as January of 1958, which is when he presented his second plot to the Supreme Committee, to withhold his subsequent intentions from the Committee. Two reasons for such a decision could have been that he considered his plans better than those of his rivals, and resented the Committee's rejection of his second plot, and therefore decided to rely only on his closest associates in the future.

Another possible reason for Qasim's failure to present his last coup plan to the Committee could have been that the profound divisions and rivalries in the Supreme Committee had convinced him that the stakes were too high to risk involvement of fellow Free Officers who might withdraw their support at the last moment. Qasim could therefore have concluded that he had to act unilaterally to achieve what he considered to be the objectives of the revolution. It is possible that this also explains his reluctance to endorse other officers' coup plans, as suggested by the failure of al-Shawwaf's plot in May 1958. A third possibility is that he was biding his time until circumstances would offer him an opportunity to control the course of events by enabling his units and those of his co-conspirators 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif and 'Abd al-Latif al-Darraj to play the leading role in the great revolutionary endeavor.

The brief description of the plots under the previous heading above facilitates making a number of observations and also to draw a final conclusion regarding the July 14 coup.

First, the following three circumstances explain why so many coup plans and attempts failed: (1) the plan was rejected by the Supreme Committee, (2) one or more of the regime's three pillars was absent from a targeted event, and (3) one or several of the Free Officers who had pledged their support for a particular plan withdrew this support. Second, there seems to have been some concern among the S.C. members about the King's safety and the likelihood of the loss of innocent lives. The Committee even went as far as rejecting a plot because the King would most likely be killed and loss of innocent life incurred. The November 1957 coup plan, however, suggests that the safety of the King was not always an overriding concern. On the other hand, it is not clear why the plot was not carried out, and it is not impossible that the anticipated assassination of Faisal II could be the explanation. Third, the fact that one of the rejected plans involved a suicide mission shows that some Free Officers considered paying the ultimate price to initiate a revolution, but that the majority of the S.C. members considered this price too high to pay.

A fourth observation is that Qasim was not reluctant to use excessive force to achieve his objectives, testified to by his proposal that two tanks open fire on the dignitaries present on a raised platform during the celebrations of Army Day. The use of such firepower against human targets would invariably have incurred loss of innocent lives. This seeming disregard for human life appears to be contradicted, however, by Qasim's lenient treatment of political prisoners and many of his enemies after the revolution. Fifth, when several Free Officers were involved in the planning of a plot they met in separate small groups at separate locations, a fact which suggests that the risk of detection by the regime's agents was considerable. Sixth, the reason Batatu gives for Naji

Talib's failed plot of January 1958, that 'Abd al-Rahman 'Arif, one of the commanders, could not trust his officers, appears to be a mere excuse for not participating, since 'Arif must have known long before the planned coup attempt whether his subordinate officers could be relied upon.

The above discussion has paved the way for the final conclusion regarding Qasim's role in the July revolution. The argument proposed here is that Qasim carried out a coup simultaneously against the regime and against his Free Officer colleagues within a general conspiracy of the Free Officers. The validity of this argument is primarily substantiated by Qasim's disregard for the democratic procedure to present his third plot to the Supreme Committee for discussion. Qasim never attempted to explain or justify this decision, but, considering the practice of discussing coup plans at S.C. meetings for general approval or rejection, it can be concluded that Qasim had ulterior motives when violating this tradition. In view of the Free Officers movement's long record of rejected coup plans and aborted coup attempts, he most likely considered himself to have the best chance of carrying out a successful coup, and he probably also regarded himself as the sole guarantor that the goals of the revolution would be achieved. Leaving the leadership in a colleague's hands was therefore an option he did not contemplate.

THE JULY 14 COUP AND POPULAR REACTIONS

As has been argued in previous chapters a revolutionary situation fuelled by widespread discontent with the regime among the urban and rural population, and the armed forces had been building up during the decade prior to the July 14, 1958 coup. Iraqi society had been increasingly polarized during the violent demonstrations against the unratiſed Portsmouth Agreement of 1948, the intifadha of 1952, the strong opposition to the formation of the Baghdad Pact in 1955, and the explicit public support for Egypt during the Suez Crisis of 1956, which compelled Nuri al-Sa'id to take certain measures to distance himself from France and Britain. Nuri had efficiently eliminated domestic opposition by way of rigged elections in 1954, censorship, laws forcing students who opposed his pro-West policies to enlist in the army, and by way of denationalization of communists.³⁶² This left the army the only force in society sufficiently well organized and powerful to effectuate long overdue political and social change in Iraq. Individual younger military officers concluded that due to the prevailing constraints on normal political activity such change could only be brought about by the forceful removal of the unpopular regime. As argued in the previous chapter, however, the opposition to the regime among military officers was never a unified force with a single agenda.

The eruption came on July 14 when the military executed a coup d'état. Within a few hours the rebellious army units led by a small group of Free Officers had swept away the

³⁶² Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri, pp. 6, 79.

monarchy and Nuri's government, and established control over Iraq.³⁶³ This chapter examines why the monarchy collapsed like a house of cards, why the coup was actually the initial phase of a revolution, and why the Free Officers had not taken action earlier. Another question which is discussed is why the coup was relatively bloodless, with the exception of the siege of the Rihab Palace and a few other casualties including three American fatalities.³⁶⁴ The question as to why Westerners were not, as a rule, attacked, the burning of the British Embassy of course being the foremost exception, is also addressed. Furthermore, this chapter also attempts to find answers to the questions of who ordered the murder of the royal family and the attack on the British Embassy, and of the possible motives behind these acts of violence. Finally, the question of to what extent developments in northern and southern cities differed from those in Baghdad and what the reasons might be for these differences will also be addressed.

Having repeatedly changed the date of their coup for various reasons the conspirators under Brigadier 'Abd al-Karim Qasim, commander of the 19th Brigade, eventually decided to take action on the night of July 13 and 14, 1958 when the 20th Brigade, numbering approximately 3,000 troops, had received orders to deploy to Jordan.³⁶⁵ This

³⁶³ The coup leader, 'Abd al-Karim Qasim, claimed during a conversation with reporters on July 24, 1958, published in the Iraqi Arabic-language newspaper Al-Zaman on July 25, 1958 and in The Iraq Times the following day, that the coup was over by 6:00 a.m. The British ambassador to Iraq, Sir Michael Wright, states in a telegram to the Foreign Office that the "[c]oup d'état took place between 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. on July 14," Wright to the Foreign Office, Confidential, 6:30 p.m. July 15, 1958, FO371/134199. Uriel Dann asserts in Iraq Under Qassem that the insurgents had not taken full control of the Rihab Palace until 7:30 a.m., but 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif, Qasim's second in command, had already announced over the radio at 6:30 a.m. that the monarchy had ceased to exist, Uriel Dann, Iraq Under Qassem, pp. 30-31. Al-Ahram states that 'Abd al-Karim Qasim was the commander of the 20th Brigade and his co-conspirator deputy commander of the 19th Brigade, Al-Ahram, July 29, 1958, p. 3.

³⁶⁴ Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri, p. 211.

³⁶⁵ Ghalib, Qissat Thawrat 14 Tammuz, pp. 52-62; Farhan, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, pp. 60-64. The Iraq Times, July 26, 1958, p. 2; Majid Khadduri, Republican 'Iraq, p. 38. Ghalib, Qissat Thawrat 14 Tammuz, p. 76; Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 800. The 20th Brigade set out towards Baghdad at 9:00 p.m. on July 13, al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz 1958, p. 448. The brigade consisted of three regiments, with the first regiment under the command of lieutenant colonel 'Abd al-Latif al-Darraji and the second under

was a unique opportunity the officers could not afford to miss. Owing to the nature of its mission the army unit had been issued with live ammunition, which happened only on rare occasions due to the risk of coups.³⁶⁶ Moreover, the route to the Jordanian border would bring the troops within close proximity of the capital without arousing suspicions. An additional factor of great significance—a precondition in the conspirators' plan for a successful coup attempt—was the simultaneous presence in Baghdad of the three pillars of the regime—King Faisal II, Crown Prince 'Abd al-Ilah, and Prime Minister Nuri al-Sa'id.³⁶⁷

Having entered Baghdad early on the morning of July 14 the insurgents swiftly occupied key buildings in the city.³⁶⁸ One unit targeted the left bank of the Tigris where several important government centers such as the Ministry of Defense were located. Another unit under the command of Colonel 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif set out for the Rihab

lieutenant colonel 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif, both free officers. The second regiment was commanded by an officer who was not part of the conspiracy.

³⁶⁶ Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, p. 796. Batatu claims that two-thirds of the approximately 3,000 troops that carried out the coup possessed no ammunition, Batatu, *The Old Classes*, p. 805.

³⁶⁷ Ghalib, *Qissat Thawrat 14 Tammuz*, p. 76; Khadduri, *Republican 'Iraq*, p. 38; Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, p. 797. Al-Zubaidi's account of the movements of the king, the crown prince, and the prime minister during the days prior to the coup testifies to the extent to which it depended on chance. Originally the date for the deployment of 20th Brigade had been set for July 3. When the Free Officers' Supreme Committee learned that Nuri and 'Abd al-Ilah would be abroad on that date the Free Officers managed to have the deployment postponed until July 13, the day when the two men were scheduled to return to Baghdad in order to accompany King Faisal to a Baghdad Pact meeting in Istanbul the following day. There were, however, factors outside the control of the Free Officers which coincided to make their undertaking possible. Faisal had originally planned to leave for Europe on July 8 to meet with his fiancée, but was persuaded on July 7 by a minister to postpone his departure until July 9 in order to sign two new laws of the Iraqi-Jordanian Arab Union before his journey. On July 8 a fateful telegram arrived from the Shah of Iran who was visiting the United States at the time. The Iranian monarch suggested that the leaders of the Baghdad Pact countries meet in Istanbul on July 14 to be briefed by him on his talks with President Eisenhower. The telegram made Faisal postpone his departure a second time, a circumstance which played directly into the hands of the conspirators, al-Zubaidi, *Thawrat Tammuz 1958*, pp. 438-439, 463-464.

³⁶⁸ Before noon Qasim had established himself in the Ministry of Defense and the successful coup was a fact. The task of Qasim, commander of the 19th Brigade, had been to cover the rear of the units advancing on Baghdad. Having taken up positions in the city they had asked the 19th Brigade to enter Baghdad. Qasim had refused, however, stating that he would enter the city only after Nuri's death had been confirmed. Having learned that Nuri had escaped, the 19th Brigade finally marched into the capital at 10:30 a.m., interview with Lieutenant Colonel Fadhil Jasim al-Mukhtar on May 4, 1977, quoted in al-Zubaidi, *Thawrat 14 Tammuz*, p. 481.

Palace and Nuri al-Sa'id's residence situated on the right bank of the river. 'Arif installed himself in the radio station and dispatched a unit to assume control of the Palace.³⁶⁹ There are several divergent accounts of what happened after the Palace came under fire. According to a British Embassy report dated August 4, Brigadier Naji Talib, who had not been present at the Rihab Palace on July 14, told Falle, the Oriental Counselor at the British Embassy that the insurgents had not intended to kill the royal family. Surprisingly enough, he asserted that the Crown Prince had died honorably.³⁷⁰

Naji Talib's claim that the Free Officers had not intended to kill King Faisal II confirms an earlier assertion by the Minister of Guidance Muhammad Siddiq Shanshal in a conversation with the British ambassador on July 27. The Free Officers had not

³⁶⁹ Dann, Iraq Under Qassem, pp. 28-30; Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 802; Khadduri, Republican Iraq, p. 42. It was also 'Arif's task to take control of the camp of the motorized police force. It was crucial for two reasons to subdue this force quickly: a) it was equipped with modern weapons and armored personnel carriers; and b) it constituted a formidable fighting force numbering 3,500 men well experienced in urban operations against demonstrators. With regard to al-Darraj, he was to occupy the Ministry of Defense and the telegraph building. The insurgents entered the capital at 5:00 a.m., al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, pp. 450, 467.

³⁷⁰ Wright to the Foreign Office, Confidential, August 4, 1958, FO371/134201. Ghalib, himself a Free Officer, writes in his Qissat Thawrat 14 Tammuz, p. 84 that a military intelligence officer told him two weeks after the revolution that three officers had entered the Rihab Palace to inform the royal family that resistance was futile and that they had to surrender. Shortly afterwards the Palace had come under artillery fire and the royal family had exited through a backdoor. They had been surrounded by Free Officers, who had informed them that they would be taken to the Ministry of Defense, when the King's adjutant had opened fire and injured two officers. A third officer had returned fire on the adjutant and members of the royal family standing nearby. According to Falih Hanzal a unit under the command of Captain Mandhar Salim had arrived to surround the Rihab Palace where Faisal and 'Abd al-Ilah had spent the night. Due to the insufficient number of troops available, however, the unit had been able to control only one-eighth of the area surrounding the Palace. Having informed the Royal Guard that a revolution had taken place, the unit had opened fire on the Palace at approximately 6:15 a.m., Hanzal, Asrar Maqtali al-'Aila al-Malika, pp. 98-99. A 106mm anti-tank gun had soon been provided by officers from the nearby Camp al-Washash. When it became clear that Faisal and 'Abd al-Ilah could not escape, the royal party agreed to surrender and to be transported to the Ministry of Defense. As the royal family was passing through the palace garden, Captain 'Abd al-Sattar Sab' al-'Abusi entered through the main gate and opened fire on the party killing Faisal, 'Abd al-Ilah, queen Nafisa, 'Abd al-Ilah's mother, and princess 'Abadiyya. Princess Hiyam, 'Abd al-Ilah's consort was wounded. The bodies of the royal family had then been taken to the Ministry of Defense, interview with Muhammad 'Ali Sa'id on August 8, 1960, quoted in al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, p. 458. The vehicle in which they had been transported, however, had been apprehended by demonstrating masses who had seized 'Abd al-Ilah's body and hanged it in front of the gate of the Ministry of Defense. This act had a symbolic significance since the Crown Prince had ordered, in 1945, the hanging in this place of one of the leaders of the 1941 coup, al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, pp. 455-459.

intended to kill the royal family but had been forced to open fire when the Royal Guard had offered resistance.³⁷¹ The insurgents' plan had been to persuade the King to abdicate. Furthermore, on July 14 they had taken the ministers of the old regime into custody in order to save them from the mobs.³⁷² Naji Talib stated in an interview that the members

³⁷¹ The Egyptian daily Al-Ahram reported on July 21, 1958, that a Free Officer with a microphone had demanded that King Faisal and Crown Prince 'Abd al-Ilah surrender. In response 'Abd al-Ilah had fired a submachine gun and killed an officer. During the ensuing exchange of fire the crown prince had killed one more officer and two soldiers before he himself had been killed, Al-Ahram, July 21, 1958, p. 3.

³⁷² Wright (Emergency Headquarters) to the Foreign Office, Secret, July 27, 1958, FO371/134201. Khadduri discusses two possibilities: a) that the officers had received orders to kill the royal family, and b) that the intention was to arrest the King and the Crown Prince, Khadduri, Republican Iraq, pp. 44-46. Batatu's account, based on the reminiscences of a Free Officer, concurs with that of Naji Talib: It had not been the intention of the officers to kill the royal family, Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 795. Hanzal argues that the royal family had been killed while being escorted by Free Officers through the Palace garden together with a number of officers from the Royal Guard. His account of what had happened is as follows: "Meanwhile, Captain 'Abd al-Sattar Sab' al-'Abusi was inside the Palace. He left it descending the stairs outside the entrance with the submachine gun in his hands. He turned to the right and saw the whole royal family walking in a file leaving the [royal] kitchen. After less than half a minute Captain al-'Abusi was standing right behind the royal family, a line of low trees separating him from them. Instantaneously, he opened fire from behind [the royal family] with his submachine gun [with a] sweeping [movement] from right to left. The eighteen shots which he fired hit Crown Prince 'Abd al-Ilah in the back, the King in the head and neck, and the queen and princess 'Abadiyya in the back. After that it did not take long before Mustafa 'Abd Allah opened fire from the front on the person in front of him and the rest of the officers forming a semicircle opened fire from their submachine guns, with the fire coming from the front, from behind, and from the sides, from every hand that held a gun at this moment!" Hanzal, Asrar Maqtal al-'Aila al-Malika, p. 125. It appears highly unlikely that anyone would survive such a massacre, but Hanzal claims that Princess Hiyam was hit in the thigh and carried by an officer (presumably from the Royal Guard), obviously unseen by the Free Officers, to a room where he hid her, Hanzal, Asrar Maqtal al-'Aila al-Malika, p. 126. Considering the intensive shooting, with the Free Officers surrounding the prisoners in a semicircle, this is not a very convincing claim. It can be concluded from Hanzal's account that the royal prisoners, officers and servants were walking in a line side by side, and not in a file, one behind the other. Had the latter been the case, the natural position of the escorting Free Officers would have been on either side of the prisoners, which would have prevented al-'Abusi's sweeping movement unless he intended to kill his fellow officers together with the royal party. The conclusion that the prisoners were walking side by side is, however, problematic as well, since it would probably place the escorting officers either in a line behind the captives, or, much less likely on either side of the prisoners, in the case of which they would not have been in a position to keep an eye on the captives in the middle. From the above analysis it can therefore be concluded that neither scenario is plausible, unless the escort had been removed to a safe distance from the prisoners to enable al-'Abusi to open fire. Nothing in the above quotation suggests this, however, and the only indication that the execution of the royal family was a premeditated act is that the other Free Officers joined al-'Abusi in the massacre. Hanzal's account is somewhat convincing at a superficial level due to the great detail, but does not survive closer scrutiny because of the many inconsistencies. One of these inconsistencies is that Hanzal places a row of bushes between al-'Abusi and the royal party. This claim has no credibility (unless al-'Abusi was standing at a bend of a garden path with the party suddenly changing direction and therefore facing the bushes and al-'Abusi with their backs), since the party was moving in one direction. The argument proposed here, however, only invalidates details in Hanzal's account and not the possibility that the royal family was killed in the palace garden. The reason is that al-'Abusi had opened fire with a sweeping movement, and that he would have caused the death of Free Officers as well, unless his colleagues had been privy to his plan and let al-'Abusi take the lead in front of

of the Free Officers High Committee had agreed to get rid of ‘Abd al-Ilah, Nuri al-Sa‘id, and King Faisal II.³⁷³ They were agreed upon putting the two former on trial and then upon executing them. As for the King there had been, according to Naji Talib, divergent opinions about his fate. A majority had wished to spare his life, but no final decision had been reached.

One source states that “[I]t appears that ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim and ‘Abd al-Salam ‘Arif had decided before the revolution to kill the three in order to remove [the possibility] of any foreign intervention to restore the monarchy, or [reinstall] the reactionary regime, or carry out an internal counter-revolution aiming at restoring the monarchy and the old regime. ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim had contacted civilian politicians asking for their opinion on the fate of the three. They had agreed on executing Nuri and ‘Abd al-Ilah, killing them, or assassinating them, but their views had differed on the fate of the King.”³⁷⁴ The same source also claims that Husain Jamil, Secretary of the National Democratic Party, had revealed to him that he had recommended eliminating Nuri and ‘Abd al-Ilah when asked by Rashid Mutlaq, a friend of Qasim’s, about his opinion on their fate. Husain Jamil had also recommended that the King be compelled to accept a new government. The monarchy should be left in place for the first few days after the revolution, the King then deposed, and the monarchy eventually declared abolished.³⁷⁵

them before he had opened fire. Such an important detail, however, would not have escaped Hanzal’s attention, since it would have emphasized the nefarious intentions of the Free Officers. Hanzal’s account is confusing which is somewhat surprising, since it must be based on eyewitness reports by the royal guards who survived the massacre. Finally, it goes without saying that the conflicting accounts discussed above of what transpired in the palace garden only add to this confusion.

³⁷³ Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, pp. 69-70.

³⁷⁴ Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, p. 70. Khadduri states that it is reported that Qasim had contacted one civilian politician regarding this issue, but that this is not certain, Khadduri, Republican Iraq, p. 46.

³⁷⁵ Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, p. 70. Conversely, al-Zubaidi argues, based on an interview with Husain Jamil, that the decision to kill Faisal, ‘Abd al-Ilah, and Nuri had been made long before the

A further account of the events in the Rihab Palace is found in a dispatch from David Mark, First Secretary of the American Embassy in Moscow to the Department of State.³⁷⁶ The source, introduced as Mr. Stupak, a TASS correspondent who had given a semi-public lecture in the Soviet capital in December of 1958 on the Iraqi revolution, had claimed that he had been present in Baghdad together with 3-4 other Eastern European correspondents on July 14 interviewing Free Officers as the coup evolved. According to his informants the detachment which had surrounded the Palace had sent word to the King that the royal family would be spared if they surrendered. When the King, who had at first agreed to surrender, was told by ‘Abd al-Ilah, however, that only a small military unit had surrounded the Palace, he ordered the royal guards to open fire. The detachment then opened artillery fire on the Palace, which caught fire. The royal family escaped into the garden and hid behind some bushes. When the besiegers entered the garden they opened machinegun fire on the bushes “as a precautionary measure” and found upon examining the bushes that the entire royal family had been killed. According to this account the bodies, with the exception of that of ‘Abd al-Ilah, were buried outside Baghdad the following day.

Whatever the reasons were for the killings of the royal family they were embarrassing to the new regime, since the deaths, in particular those of the female members of the family and the desecration of ‘Abd al-Ilah’s and Nuri’s bodies, shocked the international

July 14 coup. Husain Jamil had claimed that ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim’s friend, Rashid Mutlaq, had informed him (Jamil) in November of 1956 that the Free Officers had decided to kill the three. Furthermore, Husain had asserted that Rashid Mutlaq had contacted him on behalf of Qasim in July 1957, asking him to inform Gamal ‘Abdul Nasser that the Iraqi revolution would commence with the killing of the King, the Crown Prince, and Nuri, interview with Husain Jamil on April 19, 1973, quoted in al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, p. 459.

³⁷⁶ Mark to the Department of State, Confidential, December 12, 1958, Despatch 331, 787.00/12-1258.

community.³⁷⁷ In a conversation with Siddiq Shanshal, Minister of Guidance, in August 1958 Ambassador Wright conveyed the shock of “British and world opinion of the bloodshed and violence of the first two days of the revolution and of the advisability, if only for Iraq’s good name, of fairness and just treatment of the persons now awaiting trial and above all of the absence of any further bloodshed or vindictiveness. He gave me every assurance, within his own power, that there was no intention of any further bloodshed, injustice or political vengeance.”³⁷⁸ The absence of official attempts to justify or explain the deaths could indicate that they were not accidental. Had the Free Officers in the Ribab Palace indeed opened fire in self-defense, this would certainly have been an extenuating circumstance that the new regime would have been quick to seize upon. Accidental or not, however, it is difficult to justify killings of women under any circumstances.

The accounts of Nuri al-Sa‘id’s end are slightly less divergent than those of the end of the royal family. The general picture that emerges is that Nuri had managed to escape across the Tigris River before the insurgents entered his residence to arrest him. He hid with friends but was apprehended on July 15, wearing women’s clothing, while attempting to reach another hiding place.³⁷⁹ This dissertation will spare the reader the gruesome details of what happened to the bodies of Nuri al-Sa‘id and ‘Abd al-Ilah after they had been killed. The interested reader can find the details in the aforementioned dispatch from the American Embassy in Moscow and in the following report. A detailed

³⁷⁷ According to Dann, Princess Hiyam survived, since she had returned upstairs when the rest of the royal party had emerged into the Palace courtyard, Dann, Iraq Under Qassem, p. 30.

³⁷⁸ Wright to the Foreign Office, Secret, August 9, 1958, FO371/134201. Another expression of this shock was a memorial service held for Faisal, ‘Abd al-Ilah, and Nuri in London on July 30, Dann, Iraq Under Qassem, p. 53.

³⁷⁹ Nuri had spent the night in Mahmud al-Istirbadi’s house, al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, p. 460. For a detailed account of Nuri’s possible movements prior to his death, see al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, pp. 459-463.

account, based on a conversation Johnston had on July 23 with Lieutenant Colonel Musa ‘Adil, former aide-de-camp to several Jordanian prime ministers, who had been in Baghdad during the coup, is given in an Embassy report. ‘Adil’s informant was an Iraqi Colonel, who claimed to be one of a group of three who had killed the royal family.³⁸⁰

It is no easy task to establish whether what happened to the royal family and Nuri was the fate the coup leaders had had in mind for them. It has been argued above that the lack of official attempts to justify the killings might indicate that they were not accidental.³⁸¹ As to the fate of the ministers of the ancien régime, they were arrested and put on trial, which is what Qasim himself had had in mind for them, although it is doubtful whether Nuri and ‘Abd al-Ilah would have received a fair trial, since the public would probably, and the President of the People’s Court, Colonel Fadhil ‘Abbas al-Mahdawi, would certainly have demanded death sentences in their cases. On the other hand, Qasim’s record clearly shows that he preferred reform to death sentences, since he commuted many death sentences to prison terms, and even released prisoners, such as ‘Abd al-Salam ‘Arif, accused of serious crimes.³⁸² One can thus conclude that Qasim was not a bloodthirsty but an exceptionally lenient dictator. In light of this there may be grounds for arguing that the coup leaders did not plan to kill the royal family. One thing is fairly certain, however, and that is that had Qasim or the other leaders explicitly given the order that the members of the royal family must be captured alive, and that the commander at the lower end of the chain of command would be held responsible if they were harmed,

³⁸⁰ Charles H. Johnston, Embassy, Amman to the Levant Department, Foreign Office, Secret, July 28, 1958, FO371/134201.

³⁸¹ Hanna Batatu contends that the Free Officers did not intend to kill the King but to exile him, and put the Crown Prince and the cabinet ministers on trial, Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, p. 766.

³⁸² Norman Daniel, “Contemporary Perceptions” in Robert A. Fernea and Wm. Roger Louis, eds., *The Iraqi Revolution of 1958: The Old Social Classes Revisited* (London: I.B. Tauris & Company Publishers, 1991), p. 16.

then they would most likely have been captured alive. In consideration of the foregoing, one may therefore with reasonable certainty conclude that no such order was issued.

Peaceful and Violent Popular Reactions

The population of Baghdad and other cities took to the streets in celebration of the overthrow of the old regime and their newly won freedom. Some scholars and analysts have argued that the crowds that filled the streets in Baghdad were “a mob of hundreds of thousands,,,milling through the streets screaming its joy and its thirst for vengeance...The revolutionaries were apparently unprepared for this reaction...”³⁸³ The Baghdadis had been encouraged earlier in the morning in ‘Arif’s radio address to come out into the streets and watch the revolution unfold. A report from the American Embassy in Baghdad refers to another public announcement, the issuance by the Military Command on July 15 of Republic Order No. 8. The Order can without too much stretch of the imagination be interpreted as inciting the Baghdadis, since it promised a reward of ID10,000 (\$28,000) “to whomever arrests the traitor Nuri al-Sa‘id who escaped from the people’s anger.”³⁸⁴ A third instance of the Free Officers inciting the population occurred later the same day after Nuri al-Sa‘id had been killed and ‘Abd al-Salam ‘Arif called on Baghdadis to “come and see the body of the ‘enemy of Allah’ and the people”.³⁸⁵ “The enemy of Allah,” ‘adu’l-Ilah is a pun on ‘Abd al-Ilah, the meaning of which is “servant of god.” The American Embassy report from Baghdad also states that “[s]ome reliable sources

³⁸³ Dann, Iraq Under Qassem, p. 33. Falih Hanzal, an apologist of the monarchy, confirms that the streets of Baghdad were filled with crowds early in the morning. He also corroborates the anti-regime sentiments among the spectators watching the standoff outside the Rihab Palace. These Baghdadis called on the Royal Guard to surrender to the forces of the revolution, Hanzal, Asrar Maqtali al-‘Aila al-Malika, p. 112.

³⁸⁴ Robert C. F. Gordon, Second Secretary of Embassy (For the Ambassador) to the Department of State, Confidential, August 7, 1958, Despatch no. 60, 787.00/8-758. Subject: Some Observations on Baghdad Mob Action, July 14-16, 1958; Al-Ahram, July 21, 1958, p. 7.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

reported that the larger mobs and groups were harangued and incited to specific action by known Ba‘thists.”³⁸⁶

One can infer from the account referred to in the above paragraph that the demonstrators had evil intentions and that they appeared to have been “organized” by the insurgents to a certain extent over the radio; the latter assertion is confirmed by the Embassy report quoted above. This does not exclude the possibility that some crowds could have been organized or incited by other forces. The report, written by the Second Secretary at the American Embassy in Baghdad, also states the following: “[T]he mob was called out, assisted with transportation, and incited to action early on the morning of July 14.”³⁸⁷ The secretary further states that the task of mobilizing mob support had been “sub-contracted” by the Free Officers to Ba‘thist leaders. This was confirmed by reliable sources who had identified some of the agitators inciting the mob as individuals “associated with the local Ba‘thist organization.”³⁸⁸ Furthermore, the Iraqi Army had, according to Embassy witnesses, been directly involved in transporting young men early

³⁸⁶ Ibid. Gordon’s claim that agitators were active on the streets on July 14 is plausible, but the question is whether they were inciting “larger mobs and groups.” Al-Zubaidi contends that the Free Officers, both as an organization and individually, had contacted the United National Front to have the different parties prepare the masses and rally them around the revolution on July 14. On July 11 Lieutenant ‘Ala’ al-Janabi, a Ba‘thist, informed the secretary of the Ba‘th Party, ‘Ali Salih al-Sa‘di, of the date of the coup asking him to be prepared to use the party apparatus to support the revolution if need be. Al-Janabi had not been asked by the Supreme Committee to inform the Ba‘thists about the coup plans. Furthermore, al-Zubaidi believes that ‘Abd al-Salam ‘Arif most likely had informed Ba‘th Party leader Fu‘ad al-Rikabi about the exact date of the coup. Fa’iq al-Samarra’i of the Istiqlal Party was informed about the coup plans by an officer of the 20th Brigade close to him a week before the coup, al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, pp. 481-482. Kamil al-Chadirchi of the National Democratic Party and the Iraqi Communist Party were both informed by Rashid Mutlaq on July 11 by order of ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim. The Communist Party apparatus was alerted to be prepared for the coup, interview with Husain Jamil on April 10, 1973, and Ittihad al-Sha‘b, July 18, 1959, both sources quoted in al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, p. 483.

³⁸⁷ Robert C. F. Gordon, Second Secretary of Embassy (For the Ambassador) to the Department of State, Confidential, August 7, 1958, Despatch no. 60, 787.00/8-758. Subject: Some Observations on Baghdad Mob Action, July 14-16, 1958.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

on the morning of July 14 from outlying areas of Baghdad in military vehicles; other young men were transported in civilian vehicles.

Norman Daniel, an eye-witness to the Iraqi revolution, gives an account of the first hours of the revolution diametrically opposite to that of Dann and the second secretary at the American Embassy, emphasizing: "No one who was on the streets that morning will doubt the cheerful air of spontaneity with which this celebration of sudden freedom began...There was no sign that these crowds had been organized."³⁸⁹ Given the fact that the exchange of fire between insurgents and loyalists was minimal, the Baghdadis would most likely have taken to the relatively safe streets to celebrate their joy at the fall of the old regime even without 'Arif's prompting. Furthermore, instances are not unheard of when people exploit revolutionary situations intent on looting or settling old scores without the need of being organized for this particular purpose. This leads one to conclude that the above contradictory accounts are not mutually exclusive but can both be correct.

As a matter of fact, the physical location of eyewitnesses could have played a role in producing seemingly contradictory accounts, since the situation might vary from one part to another of such a large city as Baghdad. Furthermore, one can safely conclude that only a minority of the demonstrators was transported to the city center, since it would have been too time-consuming and would have required thousands of trucks to move hundreds of thousands of people. Moreover, an operation on such a scale would have required preparations before the coup, which would in turn, of course, have attracted the

³⁸⁹ Norman Daniel, "Contemporary Perceptions" in Fernea and Louis, eds., p. 11; Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett also mention that "[h]uge crowds poured into the streets...celebrating the downfall of the ancien régime..." At the same time the two authors find it remarkable that the violence was so limited, considering the intense feeling against the old regime among the Baghdadis. Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, Iraq Since 1958, p. 49.

attention of the authorities. The majority of the demonstrations were thus more or less spontaneous, or, possibly, organized locally by agitators.

One argument, based on interviews with several party leaders, contends that these were privy to Qasim's plan and therefore in a position to take necessary steps to mobilize vindictive demonstrators. According to this argument, a spirit of vengeance permeated the crowds, which are estimated at least at one hundred thousand in Baghdad on July 14, and this movement "was like a tide...and became so terrible and overwhelming in its sweep that the military revolutionaries...declared a curfew and later...martial law."³⁹⁰ A somewhat different picture emerges, however, when a report of the American Embassy in Baghdad is juxtaposed with the above argumentation. The report states that "mob violence" was limited: "One of the most significant aspects of the recent mob action in Baghdad was that there was no large-scale, uncontrolled and indiscriminate destruction and looting. There was no general wrecking of buildings, looting of stores, or attacking of minority group establishments."³⁹¹

As has been pointed out above there were instances of violence directed at individuals—Iraqis and foreigners—and at institutions, such as the British Embassy.

³⁹⁰ Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 805.

³⁹¹ Robert C. F. Gordon, Second Secretary of Embassy (For the Ambassador) to the Department of State, Confidential, August 7, 1958, Despatch No. 60, 787.00/8-758. Subject: Some Observations on Baghdad Mob Action, July 14-16, 1958. The claim that the demonstrators were bent on vengeance is an important link in Batatu's overarching argument that the people played a prominent role in bringing down the monarchy. If the demonstrators had been as bent on vengeance as Batatu contends, however, a huge police and army presence would have been necessary to prevent violence. One can infer from Western eyewitness reports that the force present in the capital on July 14 was insufficient for the enforcement of the curfew, since it was ignored with impunity by some demonstrators as stated in Gordon's report. This in turn leads one to concur with Daniel's impression that the majority of demonstrating Baghdadis was in a much more peaceful mood than some scholars and observers argue. It is difficult to reconcile the argument of a vengeance-driven mass of people with the absence of large-scale destruction and loss of life in the city. Batatu points to the destruction of hated symbols of imperialism and the monarchy, such as statues of King Faisal and General Sir Frederick Stanley Maude, as manifestations of popular vengeance, but such instances can be seen as fairly limited expressions of pent-up popular resentment as argued below. Having said this, however, Batatu's argument of the importance of popular participation for the success of the July 14 coup is still valid even without his emphasis on vengeance, Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 805.

During the siege and burning of the British Embassy one member of the staff was killed, and two were injured.³⁹² In the afternoon an army officer arrived, assuring the British that the Army would protect the Embassy. Before leaving, he assigned eight soldiers to guard it. What Ambassador Wright then describes rather matter-of-factly must in reality have been a nightmare experience, which could have ended with the death of twenty-eight people in addition to Iraqi deaths outside the embassy had the British opened fire:

Soon one of the soldiers shot himself in the foot. The other soldiers said he had been shot by someone from the Embassy. Thereafter [the] soldiers became sullen... Neither the soldiers nor the police made any serious attempt to prevent [the] large crowd from breaking into [the] Embassy compound. Some of the crowd had rifles. I was shot at myself by a man in uniform at short range. We were soon obliged to withdraw to the registry where we remained for about an hour and a half while [the] Embassy was being looted and set on fire...Eventually [a] large mob said they would set fire to [the] registry unless those within came out unarmed. This we did, and a soldier led us through the crowd into the garden and gathered a few soldiers around him. About twenty minutes later three armoured cars arrived and chased the looters away.³⁹³

This account shows that the British Embassy staff could have been attacked and killed after they surrendered. The question is why they were not.

The above report ends with a comment which testifies to how exposed the position of the Embassy staff was, and how fatal an impact decisions made in London and Washington could have on the situation of British and American diplomats in Iraq: "If American and perhaps British forces enter Lebanon the situation could become ugly...If necessary, I may ask for safe conduct for wives, children and perhaps others to Habbaniya or to [the] Persian border, or possibly by train to Basra."³⁹⁴ British and

³⁹² Wright to the Foreign Office, Confidential, 6:30 p.m. July 15, 1958, FO371/134199.

³⁹³ Ibid. A confidential report from Ambassador Sir Michael Wright to the Foreign Office clearly shows how great a danger the Embassy staff were in during this incident despite the presence of twenty-five Iraqi policemen. guarding the Embassy.

³⁹⁴ Wright to the Foreign Office, Confidential, 6:30 p.m. July 15, 1958, FO371/134199. Gallman states in his Iraq Under Nuri that he had similar concerns, having learned on the morning of July 15 that U.S.

American diplomats had reason to be concerned about the safety of their compatriots. According to a British estimate there were as many as 2,000 British subjects and 1, 400 American citizens in Baghdad alone at the time of the revolution.³⁹⁵ Only a small number of Westerners, however, were killed or injured during the July 14 events.

As early as July 14 Western diplomats believed they had a clear picture of who had perpetrated violent acts during the day. The “mob” which burned the British Embassy, the British Consulate, and the British Information Office “was made up of boys and young men between the ages of 12 and 20. The same is true of the groups which mutilated the bodies of various individuals...A good portion of the mob was made up of youths who had been specially imported.”³⁹⁶ This information came from eyewitnesses to the “mob action”, regarded by the American Embassy as reliable sources, including Western diplomats.

By the late evening Ambassador Gallman felt certain enough about the success of the coup to report to the Department of State that the enthusiasm for it in Baghdad was considerable and that he believed it would prove as popular in the provinces.³⁹⁷ Three weeks later his impression had not changed. The Ambassador confirmed that the public’s and army’s support for the coup had been immediate and complete. His private research into how widespread the support for the new regime was “in the labor, domestic servant, and chauffeur class” yielded the following findings: “When I asked them if they regretted

Marines would land in Lebanon. He feared that the American Embassy could suffer the same fate as the British Embassy, despite the fact that it was surrounded by tanks, and troops were stationed inside the compound for the embassy’s protection, Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri, p. 202.

³⁹⁵ Wright (Emergency H.Q.) to the Foreign Office, Secret, July 16, 1958, FO371/134199.

³⁹⁶ Robert C. F. Gordon, Second Secretary of Embassy (For the Ambassador) to the Department of State, Confidential, August 7, 1958, Despatch no. 60, 787.00/8-758.

³⁹⁷ Gallman to the Department of State, Secret, July 14, 1958, 11:00 p.m., 787.00/7-1458.

the death of [the] King, the majority promptly replied: 'No. He did nothing for the poor.'"³⁹⁸

The British Ambassador, Wright, appeared not to be convinced that the military was in complete control during the first days after the coup, and had no illusions about what the result would be if the "mob" took over the streets: "If [the] army lost control, there would be nothing to restrain the mob who might kill and loot indiscriminately."³⁹⁹ Considering the burning of the British Embassy on July 14, it comes as no surprise that Wright's assessment of the situation in Baghdad appears somewhat more pessimistic than that of American diplomats in the city. An American Embassy analysis of the events of July 14-16 concludes that the police and the military protected Western Embassies, and European stores and homes. In addition to this, beginning at 9:00 a.m. the new regime also issued repeated orders on the radio that foreigners and their property must not be molested, announcing that "[a]ll foreigners in Iraq are to be treated as friends and guests."⁴⁰⁰ A weighty reason for not harming Westerners was that this would likely weaken the case for foreign intervention in Iraq.

The American analysis is evidence that the new regime did not incite the population with xenophobic statements and actually went to great lengths to protect all foreigners in the country and to dissuade the public from attacking non-Iraqis. Furthermore, at 11:00 a.m. a curfew was announced effective from 1:00 p.m. July 14 to 7:00 a.m. July 15. The analysis states: "The main streets were almost empty of all but official vehicles and it

³⁹⁸ Gallman to the Secretary of State, Secret, August 4, 1958, 787.00/8-458.

³⁹⁹ Wright (Emergency H.Q.) to the Foreign Office, Secret, July 16, 1958, FO371/134199. By July 22 the new regime had assessed that the military presence in the city was no longer necessary. The army units which had executed the coup started to withdraw from Baghdad on July 22, 1958, Al-Ahram, July 23, 1958, p. 6.

⁴⁰⁰ Robert C. F. Gordon, Second Secretary of Embassy (For the Ambassador) to the Department of State, Confidential, August 7, 1958, Despatch no. 60, 787.00/8-758.

appears as if all of the shops in the city remained closed.”⁴⁰¹ This picture is confirmed by Wright on July 16, 1958. He writes that martial law and a curfew have been imposed, and that the army is determined to protect foreign lives and property.⁴⁰² On July 15 the American Embassy reported at 11:00 p.m. that the city, under a curfew 7:00 p.m. July 15 to 5:00 a.m. July 16, seemed quiet, but that there had been sporadic gatherings of people throughout the day, apparently in violation of orders banning meetings. Some of these gatherings seemed, according to the report, to have been encouraged by soldiers.⁴⁰³ By the evening of July 16, however, what American diplomats called “mob action” had been effectively suppressed, and the authorities had even started to remove revolutionary graffiti from building walls in Baghdad.⁴⁰⁴

With Western documents having cleared the new regime’s name regarding the attack on British institutions in the city, it is time to address the following question: If the military did not incite the population to attack the British Embassy, who ordered and carried out the attack, and for what purpose? The above argumentation has established that the insurgents themselves attacked certain targets, such as the Rihab Palace and Nuri’s residence, and by radio incited the population to capture Nuri al-Sa’id by putting a prize on his head.

Left-wing parties, especially the Iraqi Communist Party, known for their hatred of imperialism could very well have organized the burning of the British Embassy. Two

⁴⁰¹ Robert C. F. Gordon, Second Secretary of Embassy (For the Ambassador) to the Department of State, Confidential, August 7, 1958, Despatch no. 60, 787.00/8-758.

⁴⁰² Wright (Emergency H.Q.) to the Foreign Office, Secret, July 16, 1958, FO371/134199. This is also confirmed by Pravda of July 16, 1958, p. 5. The paper reports that all of Iraq has been placed temporarily under martial law, that military administration has been introduced in some areas, and that General Ahmad Salih al-‘Abdi has been appointed Governor General of Iraq.

⁴⁰³ Gallman to Secretary of State, Confidential, July 15, 1958, 11:00 p.m., 787.00/7-1558.

⁴⁰⁴ Robert C. F. Gordon, Second Secretary of Embassy (For the Ambassador) to the Department of State, Confidential, August 7, 1958, Despatch no. 60, 787.00/8-758. Subject: Some Observations on Baghdad Mob Action July 14-16, 1958.

other parties that harbored strong anti-British feelings were the Ba‘th Party and the National Democratic Party. The former could have organized the attack on the British Embassy on account of its support for the anti-British Egyptian leader Gamal ‘Abdul Nasser. One circumstance that could point in the direction of the Ba‘thists as the perpetrators of the attack on the British institutions is the fact that the American Embassy was not attacked. With the Americans being perceived, especially by communists, as being in the process of gradually replacing the British as the paramount imperialist power in the Middle East, it would make sense to attack American interests as well, despite the fact that Nuri al-Sa‘id and ‘Abd al-Ilah were primarily identified by Iraqis with British interests.

The above paragraph shows how difficult it is to establish with exact certainty who attacked British institutions in Baghdad on July 14. Furthermore, it is also no easy task to attempt to determine why there was only one fatality at the Embassy, in particular in view of the strong anti-British sentiments in Iraq. Why were not more people killed in the attack? One possible explanation is that whoever organized the attack was more interested in destroying symbols of British influence in Iraq, rather than killing British subjects. The fact that the attackers chose the “symbolic” approach rather than the latter, strongly suggests that the purpose of the attack was to destroy buildings, in particular since neither the police nor the soldiers posted to guard the British Embassy compound took any action to stop the attackers and nothing prevented the demonstrators from killing every one inside the Embassy.⁴⁰⁵ As has already been stated, the possibility that there was a link between the attackers and the leaders of the Free Officers is remote. The

⁴⁰⁵ See Wright’s account above of the incident.

reason is that the new regime would not have sanctioned an act which would have so drastically increased the risk of foreign intervention at a moment when the former had far from consolidated its position. It is indubitable that the last thing the insurgent leaders wanted to happen was the burning of the British Embassy, since such an act might quite possibly provoke a British military response and an attempt in cooperation with Jordan or Britain's allies in the Baghdad Pact to restore the Iraqi monarchy.

An American analysis of the identity of the Baghdadis who attacked the British Embassy states that "it is believed on fairly good authority"⁴⁰⁶ that the targeting of the British Embassy, the British Information Office, and the British Consulate occurred "at the instigation of Ba'thist and Communist leaders and speakers."⁴⁰⁷ Furthermore, the American Embassy advanced the theory that "one of the principal reasons why there was little or no use of force by the military or police against Baghdad mobs was that, almost without exception, the mobs attacked 'acceptable targets'"⁴⁰⁸ It has been argued in the two previous paragraphs that British institutions were not "acceptable targets" because of the likely consequence of foreign military intervention. A possible counter-argument is that the new regime feared the "wrath of the people" and therefore conceded the British Embassy as an "acceptable target". This argument is not convincing, however, since it can be refuted by the fact that the Free Officers had since early in the morning repeatedly declared on the radio that foreign lives and property must be protected. Thus there could have been no doubt in the minds of Iraqis that the new regime was determined to protect foreign interests.

⁴⁰⁶ Robert C. F. Gordon, Second Secretary of Embassy (For the Ambassador) to the Department of State, Confidential, August 7, 1958, Despatch no. 60, 787.00/8-758. Subject: Some Observations on Baghdad Mob Action July 14-16, 1958.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

The Embassy analysis quoted in the above paragraph draws a surprising conclusion having laid out the case for the theory of “acceptable targets.” It states the following:

Relatively rapid measures to control the mobs were apparently undertaken by the new regime for two principal reasons: a) the new authorities soon realized that if immediate and strong steps were not taken great damage to foreign lives and property might ensue, and this would result in vast problems...with foreign governments, and it might cause the flight of...foreign technicians whose assistance was greatly needed—particularly the Americans who operate the government oil refinery; and b) it soon became apparent that Ba‘thists and, probably, communists would use the mob for their own purposes and that these purposes were not at all the ones of primary concern to the revolutionary authorities.⁴⁰⁹

The first part of the conclusion is difficult to reconcile with the theory of “acceptable targets”, since it simultaneously argues that such targets are not acceptable, whereas the second part concurs with the argument laid out above. In spite of this inconsistency the analysis is an ambitious attempt to analyze the revolution within three weeks of its eruption.

It can be concluded from the arguments laid out in this part of the chapter that there were at least three groups of Baghdadis taking to the streets: the organized demonstrators, inter alia, those transported from the outskirts of Baghdad to the city center; Baghdadis who had followed ‘Arif’s call to come out and watch the revolution unfold; and people who needed no prompting to celebrate the fall of the monarchy. The question is whether it is possible to establish the strength of each group, and whether this is necessary in order to determine the nature of the takeover—a coup, a revolution, or some other form of violent change of government. In order to find the answer to the second part of this

⁴⁰⁹ Robert C. F. Gordon, Second Secretary of Embassy (For the Ambassador) to the Department of State, Confidential, August 7, 1958, Despatch no. 60, 787.00/8-758. Subject: Some Observations on Baghdad Mob Action July 14-16, 1958.

question it is necessary to address another question first—to what extent popular participation played a role for the outcome of the overthrow of the old regime.

The analysis in the above paragraphs of the nature of popular involvement in the events of the first day suggests that the majority of the crowds were not organized, and that the foreign interests targeted on July 14 were attacked by organized groups. Furthermore, the majority of demonstrating Baghdadis did not have evil intentions, of which the limited number of casualties is a clear indication. Had most demonstrators been organized—a highly remote possibility among other things due to logistical obstacles and security concerns—the indications are that they would have had “evil intentions”, that there would have been many more fatalities, and that foreign interests would have been exposed to much more destruction on July 14. If the Free Officers’ measures between July 14 and July 16—curfews and a high-profile troop presence in the streets of Baghdad—indicated that they believed that the crowds had to be restrained, what might then have been the motive for calling them out in the first place? The reason was most likely that the Free Officers needed to call out the people in order to obtain legitimacy in the eyes of the Iraqis and the world. The new regime needed to demonstrate to hostile domestic and external forces that Iraqis stood firm behind the new regime, and that any attempt to overthrow it would be doomed to failure because of the massive popular support the regime enjoyed, testified to by the hundreds of thousands of Baghdadis demonstrating in the streets for one purpose or another.

It has been argued in the previous chapter that the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy on July 14, 1958 constituted a coup within a larger conspiracy due to the fact that the limited number of Free Officers who planned and carried out the coup did not share their plan

with the Supreme Committee of the Free Officers. The arguments advanced in this chapter, however, strongly suggest that the events which took place on July 14 were not simply a coup replacing the old government with a military government with the rest of the population constituting passive spectators. The fact that large numbers of Baghdadis took to the streets to demonstrate their support for the regime change is clear evidence that the military operation was a popularly supported coup. The coup was to a certain extent a joint venture between military and civilian anti-regime forces. This contention is supported by the fact that the Free Officers exchanged views with leading Iraqi politicians and received feedback from them.⁴¹⁰ Furthermore, the fact that leading free officers took civilians into their confidence regarding the coup date also suggests that the coup was not an exclusive military operation. Finally, the insistence of certain free officers that the Ba‘thist and communist party organizations be prepared to assist in the overthrow of the monarchy testifies to the extent that the Free Officers believed they might have to depend on popular support.⁴¹¹ This fact is of particular importance since it without doubt supports the argument that at least part of the population would have actively assisted the conspirators had pro-regime forces offered widespread resistance to the coup, reinforcing the contention that the coup was not an exclusive military affair, but the combined result of a movement within the military and large parts of Iraqi society.

⁴¹⁰ It is well known from testimonies by Free Officers and leading politicians themselves that the leaders of the conspirators had been in contact with a small number of the latter, who were informed of the existence of the secret organization before the July 14 coup, Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, p. 70; Batatu, The Old Social Classes, pp. 794, 803; al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, pp. 481-483.

⁴¹¹ Al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, pp. 481-482

The Situation in the North and South

Outside of Baghdad the revolution manifested itself differently than in the capital. An American Embassy analysis gives an indication of in what manner, by posing the important question “Why was mob action limited to Baghdad?” The answer according to the analyst is threefold: (1) “Baghdad is the locus of a large poverty ridden, easily organized and available mob”; (2) The Ba’thist and communist organizations of the capital “provide agitators and leaders for the mob”; (3) The capital has a great number of targets suitable for “mob action.”⁴¹² Americans and Britons in the northern and southern parts of Iraq indubitably stood out more than their compatriots in Baghdad where a much larger number of foreign diplomats and expatriates resided. Naturally American and British diplomats were concerned about the safety of their nationals in the provinces, but diplomatic correspondence shows that Westerners were safer in the provinces than in the capital. On July 16 the British Ambassador reported that no information about the situation outside Baghdad was available except that British lives and property were safe so far, and that operations at the Iraq Petroleum Company were continuing without disruption.⁴¹³ This was confirmed by an American report from the north that Americans in Kirkuk were safe and that I.P.C. pumping stations were operating normally.⁴¹⁴

The situation in Basra on July 14 was much more reassuring for British subjects than it was in Baghdad. The only anti-British incident reported on that day was an “occasion when transport belonging to a British company was slightly stoned by a crowd.”⁴¹⁵ As for demonstrations of joy in the streets in the early morning, they remained orderly. Local

⁴¹² Fadhil Husain, *Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki*, p. 70; Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, pp. 794, 803; al-Zubaidi, *Thawrat 14 Tammuz*, pp. 481-483.

⁴¹³ Wright (Emergency H.Q.) to the Foreign Office, Secret, July 16, 1958, FO371/134199.

⁴¹⁴ Gallman to the Secretary of State, Confidential, July 15, 1958, 11:00 p.m., 787.00/7-1558.

⁴¹⁵ Basil Judd, Consul General, Basra to Wright, July 24, 1958, FO371/134202.

authorities issued assurances to the British Embassy that they would protect British lives and property, which they did by posting guards at sensitive points. Local authorities headed by Brigadier Naji Talib, Minister designate of Social Affairs, evinced interest in continuity in certain fields of activity. In a conversation with the General Manager of the Basra Petroleum Company, Talib asked that the production of oil be continued and promised cooperation. Curfew hours from 7:00 p.m. July 15 to 5:00 a.m. July 16 remained in force until July 18, when the evening hours were put forward until 9:15 p.m. in connection with a Shi'i religious festival.⁴¹⁶ According to the American Vice Consul in Basra one of the minor demonstrations in the city on July 14 had briefly threatened the United States Information Service building, but "this threat [had] soon [been] dissipated both by the police and by some Iraqis who [had] told the crowd that the new government had ordered that foreign property was not to be disturbed."⁴¹⁷ The latter circumstance had, according to the Vice Consul, been as important as the police presence in preventing an attack on the building. Unfortunately, there is no indication as to the identity of these presumably civilian Iraqis, and whether they had any links to the new regime or any affiliation with a political party.

Americans who experienced the coup in Basra, Kirkuk, and Mosul reported that there had been only a few minor demonstrations with the exception of a fairly large and noisy one in Mosul. The latter had not resulted in any destruction of property or loss of life. No

⁴¹⁶ Basil Judd, Consul General, Basra to Wright, July 24, 1958, FO371/134202. Naji Talib even went as far as transporting oil workers from the Basra Petroleum Company to work in armed convoys. Since communication with Baghdad had been severed and was resumed only two hours after the July 14 coup, Naji Talib took several initial measures on his own initiative. During this period Talib's only source of information about what was taking place in Baghdad were radio broadcasts from the capital, interview with Naji Talib on August 8, 1970, quoted in al-Zubaidi, *Thawrat 14 Tammuz*, p. 476.

⁴¹⁷ Robert C. F. Gordon, Second Secretary of Embassy (For the Ambassador) to the Department of State, Confidential, August 7, 1958, Despatch No. 60, 787.00/8-758. Subject: Some Observations on Baghdad Mob Action July 14-16, 1958.

“mob action” had occurred during the first days of the revolution. A minor demonstration in Kirkuk, however, had “briefly threatened the USIS [United States Information Service] building,”⁴¹⁸ but this threat had “soon [been] discouraged by police guards.”⁴¹⁹ The British Vice Consul in Kirkuk confirms in a report dated August 8, 1958 that the police had taken prompt action on July 14 and had the situation under control before 11:00 a.m. Minor demonstrations had taken place early in the morning during which two British vehicles had been attacked and damaged. Later during the day army units had been detailed to guard I.P.C. installations. This goes to show that uninterrupted production of oil was a priority to the new regime. Not until much later in the afternoon did the army take over the airfield and dispatch patrols into the city. The police had, however, acted promptly at the request of the British Consulate in the morning and posted guards at houses occupied by Britons.⁴²⁰

Based on the above accounts of the situation in Basra and in the northern cities one can conclude that the police and the army acted more effectively in northern and southern cities than in Baghdad to maintain order and protect foreign lives and property. This was most likely a consequence of the much smaller demonstrations in these cities, which were in turn probably a result of a less polarized political discourse prior to the revolution than was the case in Baghdad. Furthermore, it is quite possible that the Free Officers in provincial cities, unlike their colleagues in Baghdad, had not been in contact with political leaders regarding their plans, and that the coup therefore came as a complete

⁴¹⁸ Robert C. F. Gordon, Second Secretary of Embassy (For the Ambassador) to the Department of State, Confidential, August 7, 1958, Despatch no. 60, 787.00/8-758. Subject: Some Observations on Baghdad Mob Action July 14-16, 1958.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Wright to Selwyn Lloyd, Confidential, August 11, 1958, FO371/134202, sending a copy of a report by H.C. Whyte, Vice Consul, Kirkuk, on the situation there since July 14, dated August 8.

surprise to political agitators who had not had an opportunity to make preparations for such an event.

This chapter has argued that accidental factors outside the control of the conspirators, such as the simultaneous presence of the three pillars of the regime in Baghdad, greatly played into the hands of the Free Officers. Another important argument is that the overthrow of the monarchy was not a regular military coup due to the close ties between the Free Officers and leading politicians, and the decision to solicit assistance from the Ba‘thist and communist party apparatuses in case of widespread resistance to the coup. In the case of the deaths of King Faisal and Crown Prince ‘Abd al-Ilah the contention in this chapter is that this incident could have been avoided had Qasim cared to give unequivocal orders about their fate. With regard to the purpose of the attack on the British Embassy, the argument has been advanced that it was not to kill Westerners, but merely to attack symbols of Western imperialism. This incident had not been encouraged by the revolutionary government which had gone to great lengths to protect Westerners and Western interests. Finally, this chapter has established that the revolution in the North and South was a more “orderly” event than in Baghdad, with the main issues in the North and South being to ensure the safety of Westerners and safeguard the continued operation of the oil installations.

THE REVOLUTIONARY STATE: STRUCTURE AND REFORM

The above chapters have argued that the military-led overthrow of the monarchic regime on July 14, 1958 could be termed a coup. It was, however, not a military coup where the old regime was simply replaced by a military regime which more or less retained the old system of government and pursued similar policies. Another argument that has been advanced above contends that the military operation carried out on July 14 was a coup in the context of a wider military conspiracy, since the three coup leaders withheld the details of the coup plan from the majority of their colleagues in the army.⁴²¹ A third important characteristic of the coup was that several leaders of Iraqi opposition parties were better informed of the coup plan than most of 'Abd al-Karim Qasim's fellow officers.⁴²² A fourth feature of the coup was that Qasim had asked the communist and Ba'thist party organizations to be prepared to support the coup should regime loyalists offer stiff resistance. A fifth characteristic of the coup was the popular celebration on the streets in the early hours of the coup, demonstrating the strong support of the population for the overthrow of the monarchic regime.⁴²³ These five features of the coup, however, do not necessarily make it a revolution, although characteristics three through five strongly suggest that the coup was a revolution. This chapter will therefore contend that the features enumerated above, reinforced by the intentions of the coup leaders, their

⁴²¹ Farhan's account of previous coup plans suggests that they had been submitted to the Free Officers' Supreme Committee for discussion, 'Abd al-Karim Farhan, Thawrat 14 Tammuz fi al-'Iraq (Bairut: Dar al-Tali'a lil-Taba'a wa al-Nashr, 1978), p. 21.

⁴²² Batatu, The Old Social Classes, pp. 803, 793-794; Majid Khadduri, Republican 'Iraq, pp.31-32.

⁴²³ Gallman to Department of State, Secret, July 14, 1958, 11:00 p.m., 787.00/7-1458; Hanzal, Asrar Maqtali al-'Aila al-Malika, p. 112; Daniel, "Contemporary Perceptions" in Fernea and Louis, eds., The Iraqi Revolution of 1958, p. 11; Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett Iraq Since 1958, p. 49. Dann, Iraq Under Qassem, p. 33.

actual policies, social, political, economic, and psychological change differed from Iraqi society under the old regime to such a high degree that they constituted a revolution. The chapter will also initially analyze the rationale for the new institutions introduced and how the new regime consolidated its control over the country.

Structure and Consolidation

A main objective of the revolutionary regime following the events of July 14 was to consolidate its control over Iraq.⁴²⁴ The country was facing a number of serious challenges such as the threat of an imminent invasion by the members of the Baghdad Pact, and the likelihood of agitators inciting mobs to exact retribution on representatives of the old regime for past injustices. There was also the possibility of an economic crisis if the export of oil was discontinued by the British-run Iraq Petroleum Company, and the likelihood of Iraqi assets in British banks being frozen if relations with Britain deteriorated.⁴²⁵ Also, the possibility of forfeiting the support of the population was imminent if steps were not taken immediately to rectify some of the worst policies of the old regime. In addition to the aforementioned threats, the Free Officers were a potential source of discontent, since the majority of them had not been privy to Qasim's coup plan. Finally, the lack of expertise and experience of the coup leaders in fields such as economics, agriculture, law, and government in general, made close cooperation with politicians a prerequisite to a successful and stable rule of the new regime.

⁴²⁴ See Proclamation No. 1, 14th July Celebrations Committee 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution: One Year of Progress and Achievement (Baghdad: The Times Press, n.d.), p. 7.

⁴²⁵ A possible disruption in the flow of Iraqi oil to the West was also a major concern to the United States, J. Bruce Hamilton, IRA/DFI, United States Government, Office Memorandum, July 14, 1958, Secret, 787.00/7-1459. Furthermore, the Iraqi dinar was linked to the pound sterling through Iraq's membership in the Sterling area.

The first opportunity to address a number of the challenges referred to in the above paragraph came on the morning of July 14 when the occupation of Radio Baghdad gave the conspirators access to the air waves. Colonel ‘Abd al-Salam ‘Arif seized the opportunity to read Proclamation No.1 to the nation. The first three paragraphs of the Proclamation are important enough to be quoted in full, since they show how the coup leaders addressed some of the potential problems indicated above:

In the name of God the Beneficent, the Merciful. By the help of God and the assistance of the sincere people of Iraq and members of the National Armed Forces, we have undertaken to liberate our dear Country from the domination of the corrupt clique installed by imperialism to rule over the people and to play with its destiny for the rulers’ personal interests and advantages.⁴²⁶

This short paragraph gave the Baghdadis and foreign diplomats who were listening to Radio Baghdad on the morning of July 14 several clues as to what policies the new regime intended to pursue.

In the first paragraph of the Proclamation the coup leaders explicitly acknowledge the role of the Iraqi people in the overthrow of the monarchic regime and criticize the policies of the old regime.⁴²⁷ The recognition of the role of the people is important since it claims that the Iraqi people and the armed forces are working towards achieving the same goal. The evil which the revolutionaries have just swept away had originally been installed by and served Western imperialism. This is a clear warning to the Western powers that they should expect fundamental change in their relationship with Iraq. The phrase that the corrupt Iraqi rulers played with the people’s destiny for their “personal interests and advantages,” clearly refers to the old regime’s foreign policy towards Syria and Egypt, and Iraq’s membership in the Baghdad Pact, and is a further indication of

⁴²⁶ 14th July Celebrations Committee 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 7.

⁴²⁷ Also, see Qasim, Principles of the July 14th Revolution, p. 4.

what Britain and the United States can expect from the new leaders in Baghdad. Furthermore, these warnings are also intended to dispel any possible doubts among the population as to whether the new regime serves the Iraqi people, and to mobilize the intelligentsia, workers, and peasants in support of the government. The first paragraph thus brought good news for those who had opposed the old regime's policies and a clear warning for Britain and the United States.

The second and third paragraphs of Proclamation No. 1 read as follows:

Brothers: The army is from you and for you. It has achieved what you desire and eliminated the tyrants who played with the rights of the people. You need only support the army, and know that victory cannot be achieved without consolidating it and protecting it from the conspiracies of imperialism and its agents. We therefore ask you to inform the authorities of every corrupt, harmful and traitorous element, so that they may be eliminated. We require you to stand united in uprooting these elements and overcoming their evils.

Citizens: Whilst we appreciate your patriotic spirit and wonderful achievements, we ask you to be calm and orderly, and to co-operate in productive work for the benefit of the country.⁴²⁸

These paragraphs establish the special bond that allegedly exists between the Iraqi people and the country's armed forces and that their objective is one and the same. The population is encouraged actively to fight the enemies of Iraq so that they can be eliminated. This ominous phrase is a warning both to supporters of the old regime and to those of pro-Western policies, that there is no turning back and that they will be dealt with severely. Again the people are accorded a role in the struggle against these elements. Having announced the role of the Iraqi people in the struggle against their enemies, however, the new leaders must have realized that the situation could get out

⁴²⁸ 14th July Celebrations Committee 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 7. Slightly different translations of the Proclamation can be found in Khadduri, Republican 'Iraq, pp. 47-48, and in Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 802. For the full Arabic text of Proclamation No. 1, see al-Zubaidi, Thawra 14 Tammuz, pp. 452-453.

of hand if the pent-up hatred of the old regime was unleashed without any restraint, and therefore addressed this issue in the third paragraph.

The first three paragraphs of the Proclamation must have greatly alarmed Iraq's former allies and the fourth paragraph adds one more devastating blow to Western policies by stating that Iraq "will act in accordance with...the principles of the Bandung Conference," an indication that the new regime intended to pursue a neutralist foreign policy. The coup leaders certainly realized, however, that they needed to alleviate the alarm which Proclamation would give rise to in London and Washington, and therefore stated that the new regime would "abide by all pledges and pacts consistent with the interests of the country." This was an ingenious formula, since it did not establish a fixed policy with regard to Iraq's international obligations. The formula left the option open to the regime to revise its policy at a later point in time by enabling it conveniently to refer—should need be—to the excuse that the national security interests immediately following the Revolution had dictated that certain policies be pursued.

The fourth paragraph also caters to an audience which might not have been comfortable with the army leading the country. Most likely the coup leaders for this reason stated that "The rule must be entrusted to a government emanating from the people and inspired by them...In accordance with the wishes of the people we have temporarily entrusted its presidency to a Sovereign Council enjoying all the powers of the President of the Republic, until a plebiscite is carried out for the election of a President."⁴²⁹ This possibly reassured some politicians eager to return government to

⁴²⁹ Khadduri, Republican 'Iraq, pp. 47-48.

civilian hands. At the same time it enabled Qasim to postpone such a development until a date which he would find suitable for such a transition.

The above analysis of the revolutionaries' first detailed broadcast to the population has established that the former were well aware of the challenges facing them and that they attempted to address a number of these issues in a systematic manner sending clear signals to the intended audience about their intentions. One can therefore conclude that the Proclamation is a well thought out document, which the author or authors must have put some effort into formulating prior to the July 14 events.

Following the announcement of Proclamation No. 1, the next step for the new regime was to establish a governmental structure and power hierarchy. Proclamation No. 2 announced the names of the three members of the Sovereignty Council.⁴³⁰ Additional proclamations announced the formation of a government and the positions of the revolutionary leaders in the governmental and state hierarchy. An order signed by the Sovereignty Council appointed Qasim as Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Commander in Chief of the armed forces. 'Arif was appointed as Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Deputy Commander in Chief.⁴³¹ These appointments were a clear indication that the coup leaders intended to concentrate as much power as possible in their hands. Furthermore, the fact that Qasim made the Ministry of Defense the seat of the government also underscored the weight of the military in the Cabinet. On the other hand, there was only one more Free Officer, Brigadier Naji Talib, Minister of Social

⁴³⁰ Major-General Muhammad Najib al-Rubai'i, President, Colonel Khalid al-Naqshbandi, member, and Professor Muhammad Mahdi Kubba, member. Kubba was the leader of the Istiqlal Party as well, Al-Waqa'i' al-'Iraqiyya [Iraqi Official Gazette], no. 1, year 1 (July 23, 1958), p. 1, referred to in al-Zubaidi, Thawra 14 Tammuz fi al-'Iraq, p. 500; Al-Waqa'i' al-'Iraqiyya, no. 2, year 1 (1958), referred to in Muhammad Kazim 'Ali, Al-'Iraq fi 'Ahd 'Abd al-Karim Qasim, p. 99.

⁴³¹ Khadduri, Republican 'Iraq, p. 49.

Affairs, in the Cabinet, but altogether ten civilian ministers.⁴³² The civilian majority was most likely intended to create an illusion of real civilian influence, and mask the fact that power was more or less exclusively concentrated in military hands.⁴³³

Qasim also took a number of additional steps to bring the whole country under control and secure support for the new government. Martial law was imposed on July 14 and Brigadier Ahmad Salih al-‘Abdi was appointed Military Governor-General. The Iraqi police were placed under the command of another military officer, Colonel Tahir Yahya, and Mutasarrifs, provincial governors, appointed by the old regime were replaced by army officers. Furthermore, officers were appointed to head the directorates general of ports, supply, prisons, and the civilian airports. A number of other measures taken, such as the confiscation of royal property, and the arrest of ministers and politicians who had served the old regime had a high propaganda value, and certainly contributed to mobilizing support for the revolutionary regime.⁴³⁴ Finally, the new regime also lowered

⁴³² Al-Waqa’i’ al-‘Iraqiyya, no. 1, year 1 (July 23, 1958), p. 2, referred to in al-Zubaidi, Thawra 14 Tammuz, p. 502. Qasim later increased the number of officers in the Cabinet to six, Khadduri, Republican ‘Iraq, p. 69. The political affiliation of the civilian ministers was as follows: one minister was a member of the Istiqlal Party; one minister was the leader of the Ba‘th Party; and two ministers belonged to the National Democratic Party. The Minister of Economy was a Marxist ex-professor, but not a member of the Iraqi Communist Party. Other portfolios went to independent civilians. Out of the independents three were appointed as ministers due to their friendship with the new leaders, and the remaining three had been appointed by the Supreme Committee of the Free Officers before the Revolution, al-Zubaidi, Thawra 14 Tammuz, pp. 502-503. Kamil Chadirchi, however, states in a letter to the independent Baghdad daily Al-‘Ahd al-Jadid dated May 1, 1962, that Qasim had made up his mind a few days before the Revolution about whom to appoint to the Cabinet, Dann, Iraq Under Qassem, p. 41. The wide range of political affiliations represented in the Cabinet, from Siddiq Shanshal, secretary of the right-wing Istiqlal Party, to the Marxist Ibrahim Kubba, ex-professor of commerce, would gradually prove a formidable impediment to cooperation and harmony within the government, Batatu, The Old Social Classes, pp. 814-815.

⁴³³ Khadduri states that Qasim initially consulted his ministers, but that he soon made decisions without involving the Cabinet. “Within a few months of his assumption of power, Qasim began to occupy his Cabinet meetings with trivia and made decisions independently, not infrequently keeping the members waiting, while he went to meet a visitor or an important dignitary in his office. Most of his Cabinet meetings were held late in the evening, and he kept the members until the small hours reading them a speech he had already given or a statement he had issued,” Khadduri, Republican ‘Iraq, p.69.

⁴³⁴ Khadduri, Republican ‘Iraq, p. 71. Other popular decisions made early on were to release prisoners and to abrogate legislation which curtailed civil liberties. The new regime also allowed political activity but stopped short of licensing political parties, reinstated professors, teachers and students who had been

housing rents and rents for business by 20 percent. Prices on meat and bread were reduced by 20-40 percent, and on fruits and vegetables by 50 percent.⁴³⁵ The considerable rent and price reductions were most likely partly undertaken in order to further enhance the government's support among the poor majority of Iraqis, but these actions certainly also reflected Qasim's concern for the welfare of the common people. These steps taken by the government in the initial phase of the Revolution thus suggest that the new regime wished to impress on the Iraqi people both that it was in control and that it safeguarded their interests.

Qasim's attempt to appoint a government which was acceptable both to the Free Officers and the politicians proved a failure, however, and a source of dangerous instability. Politicians resented military control and Qasim's fellow Free Officers opposed his authoritarian rule. The Supreme Committee had neither appointed Qasim as Prime Minister nor appointed 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif as his deputy, for which posts they had no pertinent experience.⁴³⁶ Conversely, it has been argued in Chapter VI that Qasim thought he had good grounds for doubting the ability of his fellow Free Officers to

expelled from schools and universities, cancelled all dismissals of state employees on political grounds, and rehabilitated military personnel who had participated in the 1941 Revolution and the leaders of the Iraqi Communist Party who had been executed in 1949, al-Zubaidi, Thawra 14 Tammuz, pp. 498-499; and, 14th July Celebrations Committee 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 94. The second source, an official government publication, further states that the number of political prisoners was approximately 220 in Ba'quba's prisons on July 14 and that all of them were immediately released. The Soviet newspaper Izvestiya reported that approximately 10,000 political prisoners had served time in Iraqi prisons between 1947 and 1958, and that tens of these prisoners had been executed during the same period, Izvestiya, September 27, 1958.

⁴³⁵ Izvestiya, September 27, 1958. According to Batatu rents of rooms were reduced by 20 percent, of houses by 15-20 percent and of stores by 10-15 percent. These latter measures, however, were not really beneficial to the poorest strata of Iraqi society, as Batatu points out, but mainly to the middle and lower middle classes, Al-Waqa'i' al-'Iraqiyya, Articles 2-4 of Rents' Control Law No. 6 of (August 6) 1958, quoted in Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 841. On the other hand, Qasim's decision to lower the price of flat bread by 33 percent benefited the poor, Republic of Iraq, The July 14 Revolution in its First Year (in Arabic), p. 197, referred to in Batatu, The Social Classes, p. 841.

⁴³⁶ Khadduri, Republican 'Iraq, p. 63. Khadduri doubts, however, that the opposition parties would have been able to cooperate, if the military had allowed them to form a government. Before the Revolution resentment against Nuri had provided an excellent reason for cooperation among opposition parties. With Nuri gone, however, the incentive for cooperation was not as obvious.

cooperate, since he had witnessed so many aborted coup attempts and so much division within the Supreme Committee. The ban on political parties during the transitional period and his repeated argument that he himself was above party politics are clear indications that he entertained serious doubts regarding the wisdom of entrusting the fate of the nation to the politicians.⁴³⁷ Furthermore, the inability of the opposition parties to overthrow the monarchy provided another good reason for concentrating so much power in his own hands. His remarkable confidence in himself reinforced by the repeated failures of Free Officers who opposed him to topple him, and his miraculous escape from an attempt on his life, all seem to have confirmed to Qasim that he was the right man for the difficult task of stabilizing Iraq and raising the standard of living for the great majority of the people. Finally, his popularity with the poorer strata of Iraqi society must have convinced him that he enjoyed the support of most Iraqis.

Qasim further incurred the ire of the members of the Supreme Committee due to the fact that some of his actions and decisions were in direct conflict with the guidelines laid down by the Committee before the Revolution. The Free Officers had decided not to

⁴³⁷ Qasim, Principles of the 14th of July Revolution, p. 5. As to the legalization of political parties Qasim had the following to say in a speech delivered on May 1, 1959: "Imperialism now tries to split up our ranks by calling for narrow parties and restricted groupings. The purpose of this is to play one against the other, while the foreigners and imperialists will sit as spectators...The parochial groupings and party affiliation at this time are of no benefit to the country," Qasim, Principles of the 14th of July Revolution, p. 12. Qasim repeatedly emphasized in his public addresses that it was too early to issue licenses to the political parties. As far as he was concerned, the country needed to focus all its efforts on rectifying the failed policies of the previous regime. Qasim stated "that my party is the entire people, and I belong to the party of right and justice...we are heading towards healthy democratic rule. We cannot be disunited by any one," Qasim, Principles of the 14th of July Revolution, p. 13. The quotation suggests that Qasim took an idealistic position on politics and truly believed that the people would embrace the abstraction of the right-and-justice party. He most likely believed that the main threat to the success of the Revolution stemmed from political bickering and infighting, which would be the result of issuing licenses to political parties. In mid-1959 Qasim announced that normal political and parliamentary activities would be resumed on January 6, 1960, 14th July Celebrations Committee 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 98.

appoint any military officers as ministers unless they first retired from the army.⁴³⁸ The Supreme Committee had also proposed the creation of a Revolutionary Command Council, which would include all members of the Committee and be announced immediately after the overthrow of the monarchy. The Command Council would have legislative and executive power during a transitional period.⁴³⁹ Qasim downplayed the threat to stability posed by the serious differences between himself and many Free Officers. In the end, the latter would prove the main threat to his regime: Qasim was not arrested and executed because the Iraqi people opposed his policies, but due to strong opposition to his regime among Free Officers and the Ba‘thists.

A further step in the efforts to consolidate the new regime’s power was the establishing of the Special Supreme Military Court, which also filled several additional important functions. The Court, popularly called the People’s Court, was formed twelve days after the Revolution, on July 26, 1958, a fact which testifies to the great importance attributed to it by the new regime. Colonel Fadhil ‘Abbas al-Mahdawi, Qasim’s cousin, was appointed as the Court’s president and Colonel Majid Muhammad Amin as military prosecutor. The purpose of the Court was to prosecute officials of the previous regime accused of corruption, endangering Iraq’s national security, interference in the internal affairs of other Arab states, or conspiracy to overthrow their governments.⁴⁴⁰ In view of

⁴³⁸ Fadhil Husain, Suqut al-Nizam al-Malaki, pp. 68 and 72; Khadduri, Republican Iraq, pp. 35-36; also, see Batatu, The Old Social Classes, pp. 795-796, whose source is the unpublished reminiscences of Engineer Colonel Rajab ‘Abd al-Majid; Farhan, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, pp. 65-66.

⁴³⁹ Al-Zubaidi, Thawra 14 Tammuz, p. 499.

⁴⁴⁰ 14th July Celebrations Committee 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution, pp. 99-100; Al-Waqi‘ al-‘Iraqiyya, no. 1 (July 23, 1958), no page reference, in al-Zubaidi, Thawra 14 Tammuz, p. 499. The Iraq Times reported on August 11, 1958 that a law had been approved “for the punishment of those who plot against the security of the country and open the way for corruption.” The law was retrospective as from September 1, 1939, and the punishment for crimes involving plotting against the state and corruption was to be hard labor or imprisonment, The Iraq Times, August 11, 1958. Subsequently, the Court also tried Qasim’s fellow officers who had conspired against him.

these tasks, it is obvious that the People's Court was also formed in order to calm popular sentiments, which were still very anti-monarchic. The importance of the aspect of entertainment and the exposal of widespread corruption under the previous regime was further accentuated by the fact that most convicted officials were released, even those considered to have committed serious crimes. Three were, however, executed.⁴⁴¹

Reform

A complete break with the past had already been announced to the nation when 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif read Proclamation No.1 on the Baghdad Radio on July 14. First, the elimination of the previous regime was manifested in a change in system of government, a republic had been proclaimed in lieu of the monarchy. Second, the Proclamation held out the promise of real participation of the Iraqi people in shaping the future of their country. Third, a complete reorientation of Iraq's foreign policy from a close alliance with the West and an anti-Soviet position in the Cold War, to a neutralist approach to relations with other powers was also announced. The first and third breaks with the past became facts as they were announced. As to popular participation, it was only the stated intent of the new regime and not yet a fact, since the government had not been elected by the Iraqi people. The fact that ten civilian ministers had been appointed to head ministries in the first cabinet, and that they represented—directly or indirectly—all parties which had opposed the Nuri regime, however, was a clear indication that the military leaders

⁴⁴¹ Khadduri, Republican 'Iraq, pp. 80-81. Furthermore, the fact that most sessions of the Court were broadcast and televised suggests that the People's Court was also intended as entertainment. This impression is further corroborated by Mahdawi's demeanor during the trials, which lasted from mid-August 1958 to late March 1959: he frequently recited poetry, hurled insults against the defendants, and satirized and joked at their expense. It is obvious that the new regime was more adept than its predecessor in utilizing political propaganda to enhance its image. Part of the reason for this was that a televised trial of "communist agitators" under the old regime would only have provoked sympathy among the population, and would most likely have led to demonstrations in support of the defendants.

were eager to confer upon the new regime a degree of popular legitimacy. This part of the chapter will discuss to what extent the intentions and actual policies pursued in various fields by the Qasim regime constituted a revolution or were largely a continuation of the old regime by different means.

The new regime's efforts expeditiously to present a provisional constitution to the people should be interpreted as part of a wish to emphasize the watershed between the old and the new era and thereby further enhance the goodwill the new government already enjoyed among the population. The new leaders were certainly well aware of Nuri's failure to create a state, with which a majority of Iraqis could identify, and therefore strove to demonstrate to the Iraqi people that the new regime was building an inclusive state which would bring justice, democracy, and prosperity to all Iraqis, in contrast to the old regime which largely benefited a very limited stratum of the population.⁴⁴² It therefore comes as no surprise that the Provisional Constitution was promulgated on July 27, 1958, less than fourteen days after the overthrow of the monarchy. The Provisional Constitution, drawn up by a Cabinet Committee, was intended to be replaced by a permanent constitution, which would be prepared by a National Assembly elected by the people after the unspecified end of a transitional period.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴² Roger Owen states that: "Nuri and his colleagues were unable to create a sense that they were at the center of a single, unique, coherent entity with an unchallengeable claim to universal allegiance," Roger Owen, "Class and Class Politics in Iraq before 1958: the 'Colonial and Post-Colonial State,'" in, The Iraqi Revolution of 1958: The Old Social Classes Revisited, edited by Robert A. Fernea and Wm. Roger Louis (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1991), p. 169.

⁴⁴³ Khadduri, Republican 'Iraq, p. 64. On July 20 two Cabinet ministers, Muhammad Siddiq Shanshal, Minister of Guidance, and Muhammad Hadid, Minister of Finance, contacted Professor Husain Jamil, a lawyer, asking him to prepare a draft of a provisional constitution with provisions made for the inclusion of two points: first, that Iraq is part of the Arab umma, and second, that Arabs and Kurds are partners in Iraq. Jamil finished the draft in two days, following which it was presented to the Cabinet for discussion. The Cabinet decided to add two articles to the draft: first, that Islam is the state religion of Iraq, and second, that

The individual articles of the Provisional Constitution manifest a real effort to create an Iraqi identity and national unity by emphasizing the partnership of different ethnic groups, the role of the people in national life, and civil liberties, all of which Iraqis had been unfamiliar with under the monarchy. Article 7 states that “the people are the source of [all] power.”⁴⁴⁴ Article 3 acknowledges for the first time the national rights of the Kurds, and states that the Kurds and Arabs are partners in the homeland. In Article 10 of the Constitution guarantees freedom of thought and expression and Article 9 provides for equality before the law, stating that “there shall be no discrimination against them [the citizens] because of race, language, religion, or belief.”⁴⁴⁵ Finally, Article 14 of the Constitution addressed the serious problem of landownership in rural areas which the old regime bequeathed to the revolutionaries, stipulating that “agricultural ownership shall be limited and regulated by law” and that existing rights would be preserved “until such time as legislation is enacted.”⁴⁴⁶ It is clear from the above articles of the Constitution that the new regime had gone to great lengths to demonstrate to the Iraqi people that it intended to address the serious political, social, and economic problems it had inherited from Nuri al-Sa‘id, and that the path to national unity led through an Iraqi identity.

“the armed forces of the Republic are of the people, and it is their task to defend the sovereignty of the country and its territorial integrity,” interview with Husain Jamil on October 11, 1981, al-Zubaidi, Thawra 14 Tammuz, pp. 505-506. In his announcement of the Provisional Constitution to the Iraqi people on July 27 Qasim emphasized the difference between it and the Organic Law, the old Constitution introduced under the Mandate, which “granted to the former royal family the power and privilege to make use of a tool to exploit the people and fetter it with the shackles of imperialism,” Al-Waqa’i’ al-‘Iraqiyya, No. 2, no page reference, July 28, 1958, quoted in al-Zubaidi, Thawra 14 Tammuz, p. 507. For a detailed discussion of the Organic Law, see Willard Ireland, Iraq: A Study in Political Development.

⁴⁴⁴ Al-Waqa’i’ al-‘Iraqiyya, No. 2, July 27, 1958, quoted in al-Zubaidi, Thawra 14 Tammuz, p.508; 14th July Celebrations Committee 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 93.

⁴⁴⁵ Al-Waqa’i’ al-‘Iraqiyya, no. 2 (July 27, 1958), quoted in al-Zubaidi, Thawra 14 Tammuz, p.508; 14th July Celebrations Committee 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 93; Khadduri, Republican ‘Iraq, p.65.

⁴⁴⁶ Khadduri, Republican ‘Iraq, p.65.

The Popular Resistance Forces, a militia ostensibly formed for the purpose of providing local security, can be viewed, due to the fact that recruitment was done on a voluntary basis, to a certain extent as part of a process aimed at increasing popular participation in the nation's political life, albeit to consolidate the government's grip on power. The regime's intention with the force, organized on August 1, 1958, was at least twofold—to mobilize popular support for the government through a militia of volunteers, and to use it as a tool to suppress opposition. The volunteers were trained in civil defense, and were used to guard important installations in various parts of the country and to provide security to citizens. Gradually, however, the militia's arbitrary use of intimidation and arrest caused resentment among the population.⁴⁴⁷ An interesting characteristic of the Force is the volunteer basis of the organization, which distinguishes it from organizations during the previous regime. It would certainly have been difficult to find such a significant number of volunteers to organize a similar force in support of the Nuri regime. Furthermore, Nuri would most likely never have allowed the formation of

⁴⁴⁷ 14th of July Celebration Committee 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 99; Khadduri, Republican 'Iraq, pp. 83-84. Qasim was initially concerned about the People's Resistance Forces since the Force was under communist influence and its objective was to arm itself. This prompted the Prime Minister to shut down the organization's recruitment centers on July 23, 1958, Notice No. 16 by Military Governor General, Al-Waqa'i' al-'Iraqiyya, no. 1 (July 23, 1958), p. 17, referred to in Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 848. On August 1, 1958, however, Qasim authorized the organization of the People's Resistance Forces, attaching it to the Ministry of Defense, that is ultimately placing it under his own command, People's Resistance Law No. 3 of 1958, Al-Waqa'i' al-'Iraqiyya, no. 4 (August 4, 1958), referred to in Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 849. By August 21 as many as 11,000 men and women had enlisted, most of them communists, Al-Hayat (Beirut, independent), August 22, 1958, referred to in Batatu, p. 849. Weapons issued to the Force for training purposes were returned to police stations after each exercise. Ittihad al-Sha'b, the organ of the Iraqi Communist Party, argued that the people, being the source of the Revolution, also was the best suited to defend it. Due to the threat reactionary forces posed to the Revolution, the People's Resistance Forces should be armed to defend the achievements of the people, Ittihad al-Sha'b, March 22, 1959, quoted in The Iraq Times, March 23, 1959, p. 4.

such an organization, since he trusted only the police and the armed forces with the task of maintaining order and stability in the country.⁴⁴⁸

Despite other attempts at reform, it was in the field of agriculture that the new regime took the boldest action to achieve fundamental change in Iraqi society. The first step was made on July 27, 1958, when the government abolished the tribal jurisdictions, whereby “the legal basis for ‘feudalism’ [iqta’iyya] in Iraq was destroyed.”⁴⁴⁹ With the majority of Iraqis dependent on agriculture, approximately 4,500,000 individuals, or 70 percent of the total population, experiencing total, partial, or seasonal unemployment, radical reform was long overdue. One government source estimated unemployment at about 40 percent of the agricultural population.⁴⁵⁰ Such a state of affairs naturally led to considerable migration to the cities. According to a Soviet source 50,000 persons left rural areas annually for what they believed was a better life in the cities. At the time of the July Revolution this had resulted in 300,000 migrants living in Baghdad without permanent

⁴⁴⁸ 14th of July Celebration Committee 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution, an official government source, states that the volunteers came from all walks of life: students, workers, peasants, lawyers, doctors, engineers, teachers, etc., that is exactly the groups in society which had minimal reason to support Nuri. Nuri’s power base was found among large landowners, shaikhs, and conservative deputies in the parliament. It is hard to conceive that these strata of society would have answered the call to support the government in a manner similar to that of the People’s Resistance Forces volunteers. This circumstance highlights the lack of popular participation under Nuri and the presence of such participation under Qasim. Furthermore, Qasim was certainly aware of the instrument of power that the Resistance Forces could have been turned into, which is why he rejected the communist demand to arm the Force. The People’s Resistance Forces was under communist influence, and had it been provided with arms it would have been a formidable instrument in the hands of the communists to implement their policies. This would have upset Qasim’s strategy of not letting any political group grow too strong, Rony Gabbay, Communism and Agrarian Reform in Iraq (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p. 128. On December 18, 1958 the pro-communist Baghdad daily Sawt al-Ahrar ran an article which pressed for an “expansion of the Popular Resistance Forces to cover not only Baghdad, as is the case now, but the whole of Iraq too,” quoted in The Iraq Times, December 19, 1958, p. 4. The article further emphasized the need for the public to be trained on the use of firearms, concluding: “Weapons should be within reach of the public for immediate use in emergencies created by plotters.” Had the Force been armed, Qasim’s enemies in the armed forces would have found it much harder to overthrow him in 1963, since the Force would indubitably have stood up for Qasim and provided weapons to the poorer strata of Iraqi society which had benefited from the Revolution and also supported him.

⁴⁴⁹ Dann, Iraq Under Qassem, p. 57; The Iraq Times, July 27, 1958, quoted in Gabbay, p. 108. For a discussion of the consequences in the rural areas of iqta’iyya, see Chapter I and Chapter 3.

⁴⁵⁰ 14th of July Celebration Committee 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 22.

employment.⁴⁵¹ In order to alleviate the difficult conditions in rural areas and the concomitant migration to the cities, Prime Minister Qasim proudly announced the Agrarian Reform Law No. 30 on September 30, 1958 and “the end of feudalism.”⁴⁵²

The objectives of the Agrarian Reform Law were, according to the Minister of Agriculture Hudaib al-Hajj Hamud, threefold:

- (1) To eliminate the feudal estates as a means of production and as an imperialist asset, and to put an end to the political influence, enjoyed by the feudalists as a result of their large landed property, and exercised in a negative manner over the state and political apparatus in accordance with their interests and the interests of imperialism, and [for the purpose of] obstructing the governmental administration. All this [is done] for the purpose of providing the ability to watch over the common interest.
- (2) To raise the standard [of living] of the fallah stratum and to offer them the full opportunity to raise their social status.
- (3) To raise the agricultural production in the country by making an efficient contribution to raising the national income and strengthening the national economy.⁴⁵³

The above objectives are a clear indication of the new regime’s intention to achieve change in Iraqi society and that this change would result in a society fundamentally different from that of the Nuri era. The question whether this good intention was translated into tangible results in the agricultural sector will be discussed below.

The Agrarian Reform Law consisted of four sections dealing with the size of land holdings, agricultural cooperative societies, relations between landowners and fallahin,

⁴⁵¹ Pravda, August 27, 1958.

⁴⁵² 14th of July Celebration Committee 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 22.

⁴⁵³ Abd al-Razzaq al-Hilali, Qissat al-Ardh wa al-Fallah wa al-Islah al-Zira’i fi al-Watan al-‘Arabi [The Story of the Land, the Fallah, and the Agrarian Reform in the Arab Homeland] (Bairut, al-Qaahira, Baghdad: Manshurat Dar al-Kashaf, first edition, 1977), p. 419; see also Khah Bat, no. 70 (January 2, 1959), both sources quoted in ‘Ali, Al-‘Iraq fi ‘Ahd ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim, p. 107. In his announcement of the Agrarian Reform Law to the nation Qasim said: “...The Revolution, which erupted from the will of the people, is a political and social revolution. Its objective is to liberate the individual from feudal control and to guarantee the people full justice, to liberate it from poverty, and to deliver it from ignorance and disease. In order to attain to these goals, it is absolutely necessary to raise the standard of living of the poor to a level appropriate for a decent human life, without interfering with the just standard of the rich,” Al-Ahram, October 2, 1958, pp. 1-2.

and agricultural laborers. The first section stipulated that no landowner hold more than 1,000 dunums (618 acres) in irrigated land, or 2,000 dunums in rainfall land. The excess land, starting with the largest holdings, was to be expropriated by the state within five years, and a valuation committee would determine the compensation that was due to the owner. The latter would receive compensation in three percent government bonds. Both seized land and state land were to be distributed within five years among peasants by occupation only, with the minimum and maximum size in irrigated land being 30 and 60 dunums respectively, and the double in rain-fed land. The price of the received land was to be paid within 20 years. Recipients could not sell their land before they had paid their debt in full.⁴⁵⁴ As to Agricultural Cooperative Societies, membership was required for fallahin who had taken over distributed land. The task of the Cooperative Societies was,

⁴⁵⁴ Rony Gabbay, Communism and Agrarian Reform in Iraq, pp. 109-110; The Iraq Times, October 2, 1958, p. 2; 'Ali, Al-'Iraq fi 'Ahd 'Abd al-Karim Qasim, p. 108-109. Prior to the Revolution there was no limit to how much land an individual could possess. One large landowner owned 1 million dunums, a number of sheikhs owned half a million dunums of land, and many others several hundred thousands of dunums, al-Zubaidi, Thawra 14 Tammuz, p. 518. Additional factors taken into consideration during the process of allocation of land were size of the family supported by the fallah, "his relative need," and whether he resided in the district where the land was being distributed, 14th of July Celebration Committee 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 24. The total area of cultivable land in Iraq was estimated at 48 million dunums. Initially it was believed that the Agrarian Reform Law would redistribute 8 million dunums of expropriated land. A survey undertaken in 1964, however, produced an estimate of 11.3 million dunums of excess land previously owned by 2, 800 persons. The total area of land to be distributed, including 6.2 million dunums of state land and disputed land, therefore amounted to 17.5 million dunums, Thawrat 14 Tammuz fi 'Amiha al-Awwal [The July 14 Revolution in its First Year], quoted in Dann, p. 59. Batatu states that the shaikhs and large landowners whose excess land was expropriated "owned between them more than 56 percent of the total of privately held land," Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 837, while 'Ali claims that 4 percent of the landowners owned three-quarters of Iraq's cultivable land. Furthermore, 1.5 million persons were involved in agricultural work without owning any land, Dalil al-Jumhuriyya al-'Iraqiyya lisanat 1960 [Handbook of the Republic of Iraq, 1960] (Baghdad: Matba'at al-Nu'man, 1960), p. 725, quoted in 'Ali, Al-'Iraq fi 'Ahd 'Abd al-Karim Qasim, p. 106. Also, for a detailed report on the financial aspects of the Agrarian Reform Law., see The Iraq Times, November 2, 1958, p. 16. In Egypt the limit for holdings of land was set at 200 acres following the revolution in 1952, Anwar Ali, "The Present Situation in the Middle East As Seen By Middle Easterners," in The Evolution of Public Responsibility in the Middle East, p. 16. .

inter alia, to provide the fallahin with loans, seed, fertilizer, agricultural machinery, to organize the cultivation of land, and to market the crops of the peasants.⁴⁵⁵

The Agrarian Reform Law brought a degree of security into the lives of tenants and sharecroppers, and also improved conditions for agricultural laborers. The Law stipulated that contracts between tenants and landlords be honored for at least a period of three years following the promulgation of the Law, a provision which prevented arbitrary eviction of cultivators. Section III also stipulated that landlords provide lands with irrigation water. The purpose of the last section of the Agrarian Reform Law was to improve conditions for agricultural laborers. It stipulated that the minimum wage for the agricultural workers be determined annually by a five-member committee headed by a government official and also including two representatives of the landlords, and two members representing the laborers. Furthermore, the Law guaranteed the agricultural workers the right to form their own unions and, for the first time in Iraq, to engage in collective bargaining.⁴⁵⁶ It is evident from the stipulations of the four sections of the Agrarian Reform Law that the main objective of the Law was radically to improve the situation of the poorest strata of Iraqi society in the rural areas, which was in radical contrast to the policy of the monarchy.

For a number of reasons the Agrarian Reform Law did not become the great success it was intended to be. As has been argued above, the intention was to implement a revolutionary change in the rural areas, once and for all eliminating the power of the large landowners and radically improving the situation of the poor fallahin. The reform program, however, proved more difficult to realize than to draw up. The plan was to

⁴⁵⁵ Al-Waqa'i' al-'Iraqiyya, No. 44, September 30, 1958, quoted in 'Ali, Al-'Iraq fi 'Ahd 'Abd al-Karim Qasim, p. 110; Gabbay, Communism and Agrarian Reform in Iraq, p. 110.

⁴⁵⁶ Gabbay, Communism and Agrarian Reform in Iraq, p. 111.

implement the Law in three stages: expropriation, administration, and distribution. The first two stages were implemented without major difficulties. The last stage, however, turned out to be a very time-consuming process. As a result, between September 1958 and the end of 1960 only three percent of the land expropriated was actually distributed among the fallahin. In order to silence critics, the Ministry of Agrarian Reform began to expedite the distribution of land, but this only gave rise to further problems due to lack of classification and schemes for irrigation and drainage.⁴⁵⁷ The extremely slow progress in land distribution led to chaos in the countryside and significant migration to the cities. This in turn prompted Qasim to issue orders to prevent fallahin who had received a loan from the government from migrating to urban areas.⁴⁵⁸ Also, in order to encourage migration in the opposite direction the government offered land and capital to inhabitants of the sarifas, slums, of Baghdad who had migrated there from rural areas.⁴⁵⁹

A lack of resources and skilled administrators and professionals were the main reasons for the problems with which the Agrarian Reform Law was afflicted. The absence of maps and the shortage of surveyors, engineers, and agricultural and land specialists, agronomists, cooperative supervisors, and accountants made rapid implementation of the

⁴⁵⁷ Gabbay, Communism and Agrarian Reform in Iraq, pp. 113-114. In September of 1959, Ibrahim Kubba, the Minister of Agrarian Reform, addressed in public complaints to the effect that Agrarian Reform Law officials were biased and that Peasants Associations were of little significance, dismissing the criticism as "unreal." Kubba also mentioned that there had been instances of resistance on the part of "feudalists," that is landowners, to the implementation of the Reform Law. The "feudalists" had reportedly obstructed agricultural production, harassed the temporary Government administration, and "frustrate[d] leases to the peasants," The Iraq Times, September 13, 1959. Kubba's denunciation of the critics suggests that some landowners resented being deprived of excess land and actively resisted implementation of the Reform Law. Another possible explanation of Kubba's public dismissal of the criticism is that the government needed to find a scapegoat for the extremely slow distribution of the expropriated land to the fallahin.

⁴⁵⁸ Al-Zaman (independent), July 8, 1959, referred to in Gabbay, p. 116. The Iraq Times, December 11, 1959, p. 9.

⁴⁵⁹ Al-Jumhuriyya (Ba'athist), January 11, 1960, referred to in Gabbay, p. 116. A few months after the announcement of the Agrarian Reform Law the interest among Baghdad's sarifa dwellers in returning to their villages was considerable: According to a newspaper as many as 70 percent of inhabitants in the Baghdad slums wished to return to agriculture in the villages they had once left, The Iraq Times, December 21, 1958.

Agrarian Reform Law an impossible task. These problems also meant that the fallahin were not provided with adequate technical support, irrigation and drainage facilities and assistance to market their crops.⁴⁶⁰ As a result of the lack of adequate resources described above, by the end of September 1963—Qasim was overthrown on February 8, 1963—only 35, 104 fallahin had received land, the total area of which was 1,800,461 dunums, though the government had seized a total of 4, 602,827 dunums of excess land, and leased out 4,237,498 dunums of state-owned land to 244,691 peasant families.⁴⁶¹

The Agrarian Reform Law and its inefficient implementation have been criticized from many quarters. Being in control of the Ministry of Agrarian Reform the communists were blamed for the extremely slow distribution of land. This criticism was based on the argument that the communists had “intentionally and deliberately sabotaged the process of land distribution,” owing to their alleged opposition to landownership.⁴⁶² Another source points out, however, that due to the shortage of professionals the distribution of land could hardly have been accelerated. Furthermore, less land was distributed during four years of Ba‘thist rule 1963-1967 than under Qasim 1959-1962, suggesting that the Ba‘thists were even more inefficient than the Qasim regime.⁴⁶³ A third source draws attention to the significant difference between maximum limits for landowners’ and

⁴⁶⁰ Gabbay, Communism and Agrarian Reform in Iraq, p. 116; Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 837.

⁴⁶¹ Iraq, Ministry of Agrarian Reform, Achievements During the Period 30 September 1958-30 September 1963, referred to in Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 837. ‘Ali claims that the total area of land seized by the government between September 1958 and September 1963 amounted to 6,632,481 dunums, in addition to which 3 million dunums of state-owned land had been reclaimed, Makram al-Talabani, Fi Sabil Islah Zira’i Ishtiraki [In the Path of Socialist Agrarian Reform], Shirkat al-Tab‘ wa al-Nashr al-Ahaliyya, 1963, p. 67, referred to in ‘Ali, Al-‘Iraq fi ‘Ahd ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim, p. 108.

⁴⁶² Al-Zaman (independent), January 14, 1961, quoted in Gabbay, Communism and Agrarian Reform in Iraq, p. 116.

⁴⁶³ Gabbay, Communism and Agrarian Reform in Iraq, p. 116. During 1959-1962 approximately 1.4 million dunums were distributed to 28,638 fallahin, while the figure for 1963-1967 was 1.1 million dunums to 28, 383 recipients, Republic of Iraq, Statistical Pocket Book, Baghdad, 1974, p.45, quoted in Gabbay, p. 116.

fallahin holdings of irrigated land 1,000 and 60 dunums respectively, and 2,000 and 120 dunums respectively of rain-fed land, a fact which perpetuated a considerable difference in income between the two groups, and also the landowners' influence over the fallahin.⁴⁶⁴ Furthermore, the law made no distinction between low-yielding wheat and barley land, and high-yielding rice land, the fertility of the soil, and the lands proximity to sources of water.⁴⁶⁵ Finally, the communists also criticized the Agrarian Reform Law for granting too much land to landlords.⁴⁶⁶ In their view, the upper limit for the holdings of landlords should be reduced to 200 dunums in irrigated land and 400 dunums in rainfall land.⁴⁶⁷ The communists were also critical of the stipulation that landowners receive compensation for expropriated land.⁴⁶⁸

Despite the problems with the Agrarian Reform Law, Qasim's concern for the poorer strata of the population resulted in important improvements in their situation, though less so for the fallahin. He saw to it that the hours for night work were limited to seven hours, and for day work to eight hours, and that workers were allowed to organize in unions. Qasim also ordered industrial enterprises with more than a hundred employees to build houses for their workers, and ordered that existing provisions for social insurance be observed. The Prime Minister shares much of the credit for these improvements with the communists, who were influential until mid-1959. Furthermore, in 1959-1960 Qasim built a whole town with 10,000 houses and public services for inhabitants of Baghdad's

⁴⁶⁴ Hushyar Ma'ruf, Al-Iqtisad al-'Iraqi baina al-Taba'iya wa al-Istiqlal: Dirasa fi al-'Alaqat al-Iqtisadiyya al-Duwaliyya lil'Iraq qabla 1 Haziran 1972 [The Iraqi Economy between Dependency and Independence: A Study in Iraq's International Economic Relations prior to June 1, 1972] (Baghdad: Manshurat Wizarat al-I'lam, 1977), p. 167.

⁴⁶⁵ Al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya, No. 1, p. 198, referred to in 'Ali, Al-'Iraq fi 'Ahd 'Abd al-Karim Qasim, p. 111.

⁴⁶⁶ Ra'y al-'Amm (pro-communist), March 31, 1959, referred to in Gabbay, p. 133.

⁴⁶⁷ Ittihad al-Sha'b (organ of the Iraqi Communist Party), August 24, 1960, referred to in Gabbay, p. 133.

⁴⁶⁸ Sawt al-Ahrar (pro-communist), June 15, 1959; Ittihad al-Sha'b, April 26, 1959, referred to in Gabbay, p. 133.

sarifas.⁴⁶⁹ He also introduced an element of popular participation into the economic planning process which Iraqis had not experienced under the previous regime: before final decisions were made on whether to implement plans for economic projects the opinion of various popular organizations was sought.⁴⁷⁰ Despite his concern for the poor, however, Qasim left no doubt in the minds of Iraqis regarding his rejection of economic class war. In his speeches he repeatedly emphasized his opposition to division among different social strata.⁴⁷¹ Qasim's dream was to build an Iraq for all Iraqis without siding with any one group, class, or party. This was truly a revolutionary idea and a radical departure from the policies of the previous regime, which largely promoted the interests of a limited, conservative group of oligarchs.

It is possible that the Iraqi government could have implemented the Agrarian Reform Law more efficiently had they hired a number of foreign experts to assist the Iraqi experts in the difficult distribution process. The government certainly had the financial resources to do so, but national pride and the anti-imperialist rhetoric at the time made the hiring of Westerners—a procedure which the previous regime had been sharply criticized for—a delicate matter. In retrospect, however, a more expeditious and well thought out implementation of the Reform Law would certainly have outweighed any negative

⁴⁶⁹ Government statement in Al-Waqa'i' al-'Iraqiyya, no. 14 (August 1958), p. 7; Article 7 of Law No. 82 of 1958 Amending Labor Law No. 1 of 1958, in Al-Waqa'i' al-'Iraqiyya, no. 99 (December 24, 1958); Article 2 of Law No. 84 of 1958 Obliging Owners of Industrial Establishments to Build Houses for Workers, Al-Waqa'i' al-'Iraqiyya, no. 101 (December 28, 1958); Iraq, The July 14 Revolution in its First Year, pp. 320ff; speech by Qasim on July 14 1960; Abdul Karim Qassim, Principles of 14th July Revolution [in Arabic] (Baghdad: The Times Press, n.d.), p. 281. Qasim stated that in 1958-1960 25,000 houses had been built for the poor; all sources referred to in Batatu, The Old Social Classes, pp. 841-842.

⁴⁷⁰ The Iraq Times, August 6, 1959, p. 3.

⁴⁷¹ "Formerly, the employer used to fear for his life and for his property. Now, the employer and the worker are brothers working together in both prosperity and adversity to protect the gains of the Iraqi Republic. They work constantly not for any transient selfish interest but for the interest of the people." In the same speech, on May Day 1959, Qasim emphasized "As to these traitors, their days are gone and they have been dwarfed in front of the people. The people have become armed with patience and faith. I insist on the co-operation and tolerance among the people. As to the execution or non-execution of the traitors, this is a matter which is left for us to decide," both quotes, Qasim, Principles of the 14th July Revolution, pp. 13-14.

consequences of hiring foreign experts. Whatever one may think of the less than successful record of the Law and his exaggerated confidence in his own ability, it is difficult not to sympathize with Qasim's efforts to improve the situation of Iraq's poor.

The foreign-owned oil companies were another sector of the economy which the new regime strove to reform. The British-owned Iraq Petroleum Company had several branches both in the northern and southern parts of the country. It had been operating in Iraq since the early Mandate years. The Company enjoyed a central position in the Iraqi economy, which would collapse without the oil revenues, worth over ID80 million.⁴⁷² When the Qasim regime assumed power, one of its major concerns was therefore to guarantee an unimpeded flow of oil.⁴⁷³ In order to achieve this goal Qasim had to steer clear of nationalization, since the British were extremely sensitive to threats to their economic interests in the Middle East. On two previous occasions, 1953 in Iran and 1956 in Egypt, Britain had demonstrated that she was prepared to fight to maintain her economic position in the Middle East. What Qasim obviously did not suspect, was that

⁴⁷² The Iraq Times, August 2, 1958. In the first quarter of 1958 Iraqi oil production was about 625,000 barrels per day, which constituted 4 percent of "free world" output and 15 percent of Middle East oil production. Most of Iraq's oil was exported to Western Europe which was dependent on the Middle East for approximately 70 percent of its oil supplies, Office Memorandum from J. Bruce Hamilton, IRA/DFI to Cumming, INR, July 14, 1958, Secret, 787.00/7-1458, Subject: The Iraq Crisis, Part II: Implications for Oil supplies. Iraq's total oil revenues for 1958 amounted to a record ID83,812,423 compared with ID48,916,685 for 1957 and ID68,858,777 for 1956. The annual average export of oil from the northern oilfields amounted to 28 million tons, and 12 million tons from the southern fields and the oil revenues for 1959 were expected to reach ID100,000,000. The explanation for the record level of revenues for 1958 were successful negotiations with the oil companies which established additional installations enabling the northern fields to increase exports and improvements made by the Iraqi government at the Fao terminal to receive heavy tankers. A deep-water terminal being constructed near Fao, expected to be completed by the end of 1960 would further increase oil exports, The Iraq Times, January 12, 1959, pp. 1 and 3. The decline in oil revenues in 1957 was caused by the Suez Crisis of the previous year.

⁴⁷³ Al-Ahram, July 20, 1958, p. 7, July 24, 1958, p. 9..

the British were as concerned about potential problems in their relations with the new Iraqi regime.⁴⁷⁴

Nationalization of the oil industry was not an option at the time, since it would most likely have jeopardized national security, which is why the Qasim regime strove to bring about gradual change in the relationship with the Iraq Petroleum Company to enable Iraq to exercise increased influence over company policies. Furthermore, this approach was important due to the propaganda value tangible results of negotiations with the Company would have. Talks were therefore initiated with the oil companies in early August 1958, emphasizing an increased Iraqi share of oil revenues, extension of Iraqi jurisdiction to the companies, and retrieval of unexploited concessions.⁴⁷⁵ There were several achievements during the first months of negotiations: First, the oil companies agreed to relinquish some concession areas. Second, 153 foreign experts at the Dura refinery were replaced by Iraqi experts, a step which added ID1 million annually to the Iraqi treasury's coffers.⁴⁷⁶ Third,

⁴⁷⁴ This is evidenced by a "placatory statement pledging complete cooperation with new authorities and wishing 'continued prosperity to Iraq and her people,'" issued by the Iraq Petroleum Company's spokesman in Kirkuk, Gallman to the Secretary of State, no. 277, confidential, 787.JO/7-2158.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibrahim Kubba, Hadha Huwa Tariq 14 Tammuz [This is the Way of the Iraqi Revolution] (Bairut: Dar al-Tali'a, 1969), p. 41. Also, on August 2, 1958 The Iraq Times reported that the government had begun negotiations with the oil companies regarding an increase to 75 percent of Iraq's share of oil profits. The paper further stated that adjacent oil producing countries had already concluded agreements with foreign oil companies to this effect, The Iraq Times, August 2, 1958. An official Iraqi source emphasizes that though the government's objective was to increase Iraq's share of the oil revenues to 75 percent, this must not result in "hindering production processes," The Iraqi Revolution, p. 51. Negotiations about increased Iraqi influence over the Iraq Petroleum Company's policies were crucial to the Qasim regime. The British-owned Company and its subsidiaries were a symbol of British imperial policy in the Middle East, and as such, an institution which in Iraqi eyes must be profoundly reformed to reflect Iraq's national sovereignty and control over her natural resources.

⁴⁷⁶ 14th July Celebrations Committee, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 53; Kubba, Hadha Huwa Tariq 14 Tammuz, pp. 42-44. 14th July Celebrations Committee, The Iraqi Revolution, a government source, states that some of the 153 American and British experts "did not possess high technical qualifications. Ninety Iraqi engineers, all holders of high degrees, were given trivial and unimportant jobs, despite the fact that the terms of contract of foreign experts compelled them to give technological training to all Iraqis, so at any time a quick transfer can be made from foreign to Iraqi management." The government source further claims "that purchases made after the Revolution were at prices from 22 to 25 percent less than the prices paid on the last purchase made during the old regime," both quotations from 14th July Celebrations Committee, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 53. Claims that the Western powers, Western companies, and the old

the Khaniqin Oil Company's concession was terminated on January 1, 1959 after the Company had informed the government that it was unable to fulfill its obligations under the concession.⁴⁷⁷ Fourth, the new regime also asserted its control over the hiring policy of the foreign oil companies, having them extend the one-month period for finding an Iraqi to fill an open position in a company to two months. Furthermore, the hiring of a foreign national by an oil company required approval by the Ministry of Economics and his contract was not to be renewed upon expiration.⁴⁷⁸ The advantage of the process

regime had exploited Iraq were a recurrent theme in Iraqi mass media following the July 14 Revolution. Interestingly enough, the same source states that the refinery had hired twelve Soviet engineers "to complete the changeover to Iraqis," and intended to employ twelve more Soviet experts. The expenses of employing these 24 Soviet experts would not exceed ID60,000 per annum as compared with ID1 million for the 153 Western experts, 14th July Celebrations Committee, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 54. The Iraq Times states that the number of Western experts working at the Dura refinery had been 144, but that they had been replaced by Iraqi experts with Soviet experts in an advisory capacity numbering 21, The Iraq Times, September 1, 1959, p. 7.

Pursuant to an agreement concluded between the oil companies and the old regime in 1952 the former were under obligation to inform the Iraqi government of vacancies and "the qualifications required to fill each one of them," whereupon the government advertised these vacancies. Since the new regime found that the agreement did not lead to the employment of a satisfactory number of Iraqis it decided to seek amendments to the agreement. Furthermore, the agreement with the oil companies also entitled the Iraqi side to appoint two Iraqis to the Board of Directors in London. It was the view of the new regime, however, that Iraq needed to be actively involved in "directing the affairs of the oil companies," and therefore demanded that one of its directors be appointed as an executive director. During the negotiations the companies undertook to study the Iraqi request "in the near future." Finally, the oil companies also agreed to supply necessary aid to a government project to establish an institute for oil studies in Baghdad, The Iraqi Revolution, pp. 51-52. The policy of replacing American and British experts by Iraqi experts is contradicted by an American Embassy report of July 21 which claims that the Iraqi "Government [was] deeply concerned lest foreign experts and technicians leave the country. Every effort is being made to reassure them and persuade them to remain," Gallman to the Secretary of State, No. 277, Confidential, 787.JO/7-2158. The explanation is most likely that immediately following the Revolution the new regime was wary to undertake any action which could be perceived as "unfriendly" towards the United States or Britain. Furthermore it was possibly not clear which of the foreign experts were dispensable at such an early stage. Finally, when the negotiations with the Iraq Petroleum Company commenced in early August, the Republic of Iraq had already been recognized by the Western powers and must therefore have been emboldened to change its policy with regard to foreign experts in the country.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibrahim Kubba, Hadha Huwa Tariq 14 Tammuz, pp. 42-44; The Iraqi Revolution, p. 49. This government source gives the date of the termination of the concession as December 30, 1958. At Khaniqin the government dispensed with the services of all 48 British technicians who were employed by the Khaniqin Oil Company, saving the Company ID150,000 annually, The Iraq Times, September 1, 1959, p. 7. In an interview with Iraqi journalists Qasim stated in December 1959 that his government was negotiating with the oil companies asking them to relinquish 60 percent of their concessions, since these had been given to the companies when Iraq was "fettered," The Iraq Times, December 11, 1959, p. 9.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibrahim Kubba, Hadha Huwa Tariq 14 Tammuz, pp. 44-46; The Iraqi Revolution, p. 51.

discussed above was that it was acceptable to both sides, guaranteed a stable flow of oil revenues, and could be exploited for propaganda purposes by the Qasim regime.

The guiding principle for the Iraqi side in the negotiations with the Iraq Petroleum Company was Iraqization. The Iraqi objective was to increase Iraq's role in company activities and Iraqi influence over company policies. Since national security was a major concern of the new regime, immediate nationalization of the oil companies was not an option. Such a policy would most likely have triggered a British response in the form of an economic boycott of Iraq, which would have compelled the Iraq Petroleum Company to cease activities in Iraq, or worse—resulted in a Western invasion of the country. With the Suez Crisis in fresh memory the Company opted to assure the new Iraqi government of its cooperation from early on. Baghdad thus stopped short of pursuing a forceful revolutionary policy towards the oil companies, but made clear its intention to change fundamentally the previous Iraqi regime's relationship with the companies as has been argued above. The advantage of such a policy was that the flow of oil was not interrupted at the same time as the government could actually demonstrate to the Iraqi public that it was increasing Iraqi control over the country's resources through negotiations.

This chapter has argued that Proclamation No. 1 was a well thought out document prepared some time before July 14, and evidence that the leaders of the military operation were well aware of the challenges facing them in the early hours of the Revolution. This is obvious from the fact that the Proclamation reassures foreign powers and asks the people to remain calm and refrain from violence. It has further been contended in this chapter that the policies pursued by the Qasim regime aimed at a fundamental change of Iraqi society focusing on improving the standard of living for the poor majority of Iraq's

population eliminating the power of large landowners in the rural areas and in national politics, and empowering workers in the cities. Based on the evidence presented in the chapter, the conclusion is that the events of July 14 were the initial phase of a social, economic, and political revolution and not merely a military coup. The circumstance that the reforms introduced by the new regime were not always very successful does not change the revolutionary character of and intention with the reforms. Furthermore, this argument is supported by the truly revolutionary changes in Iraq's foreign policy and trade relations as has been contended in the previous chapter.

INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS TO JULY 14

This chapter will analyze in detail the reactions of the Western powers, their allies in the Baghdad Pact, and the socialist countries to the Iraqi Revolution. These early reactions to the Revolution to a certain extent determined Iraq's foreign relations. Previous chapters have argued that in the years leading up to the Iraqi Revolution, Britain and the United States had pursued similar but not identical policies towards Iraq. The main difference between the two powers had been in the field of military aid where the British had insisted on retaining as much influence as possible, while the American military had attempted to increase its influence. Differences between the two allies persisted after the Revolution, but they were of a more fundamental character than they had been under the old regime. This chapter will analyze the reasons for these differences. Furthermore, the chapter will also examine the Anglo-American approach to the policies towards Iraq of Western allies in the Middle East. To what extent did the latter policies differ from those of Britain and the United States, and why did Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan not adopt a united approach to the Iraqi Revolution?

U.S. and British Reactions

American and British initial reactions to the fall of Nuri al-Sa'id and the Iraqi monarchy were that it constituted a cataclysmic event with serious consequences for the West's position in the Middle East. A major early concern of the U.S. government was

the possibility of a disruption of the flow of Iraqi oil to Western Europe. A U.S. government office memorandum argued that Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Venezuela, and the United States could make up for this shortfall.⁴⁷⁹ The possibility of the Iraqi crisis spreading to Saudi Arabia was, however, cause for greater concern, since over 10 percent of Western oil was produced in the two countries. Furthermore, the rise in oil prices as a consequence of such a disruption would put a serious strain on Western European foreign currency reserves in U.S. dollars. The office memorandum even analyzed the consequences of a worst-case scenario—a complete disruption in the flow of oil from the Middle East to the West. Such a disruption would amount to the loss of 25 percent of “total free world oil supplies.” The United States and Venezuela would be able to make up for half of this loss, but the Western European importers would not be able to finance emergency imports for long. An analysis done with such urgency—on the very first day of the revolution—of a possible disruption in oil supplies to Western Europe, testifies to how seriously the U.S. government took the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy.

Another concern of the Western powers was the possibility of communist involvement in the July 14 revolution. The reason for this fear in Washington and London was that communist control of Iraq would entail, it was believed, Soviet control of the country and its oil fields. The lack of detailed information on the political affiliation of the leading Free Officers in the new government made it difficult to assess communist influence over the regime. Six days after the revolution the British Ambassador Sir Michael Wright, reported that “[t]he role of the Communists cannot yet be assessed beyond the fact that

⁴⁷⁹ J. Bruce Hamilton, IRA/DFI, United States Government, Office Memorandum, July 14, 1958, Secret, 787.00/7-1459.

they will do their best to exploit the situation.”⁴⁸⁰ By August 23, however, after Wright had met with some of the ministers, he felt confident enough to report to the Foreign Office that the administration was one of “liberal reformers,” and that there was no better alternative, at least not for the moment. Wright therefore concluded that the best course was as soon as possible to extend some form of recognition to the new regime.⁴⁸¹ On August 27 he argued that recognition was an issue which had to be addressed urgently since it “would strengthen [the] new regime in withstanding inevitable attempts by communists and others to gain control of it.”⁴⁸² The British ambassador further underscored the danger of not extending recognition in an expeditious fashion, as this might cause the regime to seek support from the communists or Nasser, or weaken its position. Wright’s assessment of the situation suggests that from the British perspective there was no easy or obvious approach to dealing with the new regime in Baghdad.

Despite Wright’s reassuring reports to London the British were still concerned about the possibility of the Iraqi revolution spreading to neighboring Kuwait, to which testifies the British order of battle in the Persian Gulf. Britain planned by July 27 to deploy three infantry battalions with five to six frigates and one aircraft carrier to Bahrain to protect Kuwaiti oil fields in the event of an emergency. When military planners requested permission to fly in an advance unit of paratroops to Kuwait, however, the Political Agent in Kuwait and the Political Resident in Bahrain turned down the request, arguing

⁴⁸⁰ Wright (Emergency Headquarters) to the Foreign Office, July 20, 1958, no. 15, Secret, FO371/134200. The Emergency Headquarters refers to the hotel which housed the embassy staff after the burning of the British Embassy.

⁴⁸¹ Wright (Emergency Headquarters) to the Foreign Office, July 23, no. 24, Secret, FO371/134200. Furthermore, Wright pointed out that the British had a clear advantage in any negotiations about recognition, owing to the Iraqis’ “real anxiety about intervention by Hussein with our support...,” *ibid.* On July 22 *Al-Ahram* had reported that diplomatic circles in London had intimated on the previous day that the United States and Britain would shortly recognize the Republic of Iraq, *Al-Ahram*, July 22, 1958, p. 1.

⁴⁸² Wright (Emergency Headquarters) to the Foreign Office, July 27, 1958, no. 34, Secret, FO371/134201.

that the arrival of British troops in Kuwait would only stir up sentiments there.⁴⁸³ Furthermore, Shaikh Abdullah Mubarak al-Sabah of Kuwait had evinced no enthusiasm for the idea of dispatching an advanced British contingent to Kuwait when the Political Resident had raised the issue with him a few days earlier.⁴⁸⁴ It is also possible that the Resident had been impressed by the demonstrations of the Kuwaiti public in support of the new regime in Iraq and therefore insisted that no advance unit be dispatched to Kuwait.⁴⁸⁵

The landing of U.S. Marines in Lebanon on July 15 was not primarily a result of U.S. concern about the constitutional crisis and the civil war in this country. The fact that U.S. troops had landed in Lebanon within 48 hours of the Iraqi Revolution suggests a causal relationship between the two events, that is, that the Iraqi Revolution functioned as a catalyst for the American intervention in Lebanon. Furthermore, what establishes an even

⁴⁸³ The Political Resident was Britain's representative in the Persian Gulf area between 1763 and 1971. He was British India's senior official and policy coordinator in the Gulf. The Resident was appointed by the Government of India until 1946, and then by the British government. The Political Resident was represented by Political Agents in Kuwait, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, and number of other shajkhdoms. The Resident handled political relations with these shajkhdoms. He supervised Political Agents, whose policy until World War II was to avoid intervening with the local administration of the shajkhdoms as far as possible. In the post-World War period, however, due to increased oil revenues and the transfer of responsibility for the Persian Gulf states under British influence from the Government of India to the Foreign Office, Simon C. Smith, Britain's Revival and Fall in the Gulf: Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the Trucial States, 1950-1971 (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 3; Simon C. Smith, Kuwait, 1950-65: Britain, the al-Sabah, and Oil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 15; Britain and the Middle East Up To 1914, available from <http://www.answers.com/topic/britain-and-the-middle-east-up-to-1914>; "The Bahrain Public School Scheme, 1941," in Education Research and Perspectives, The University of Western Australia, Vol. 14, No. 2, December 1987, available from http://www.paulrich.net/publications/edu_research_2.html; Persian Gulf Residency, available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persian_Gulf_Residency; James Onley, Britain's Native Agents in Arabia and Persia in the Nineteenth Century, available from http://www.huss.ex.ac.uk/iais/downloads/Britain_s_Native_Agents_2004.pdf; all Internet sources accessed at 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on March 10, 2008.

⁴⁸⁴ Consul Talcott W. Seelye, Kuwait to the Department of State, July 22, 1958, Despatch 18, Secret, 787.00/7-2258 Subject: British order of battle in Persian Gulf.

⁴⁸⁵ Seelye, Kuwait to the Department of State, July 21, 1958, Despatch 15, Confidential, 787.00/7-2158. Consul Seelye had reported that the "Iraqi coup d'état caused popular elation in Kuwait," on July 14. Young men had expressed their joy by shouting "long live the Iraqi Army" on Kuwait's main street and celebrated the overthrow of Nuri al-Sa'id. Three days later the Consul had reconfirmed these reactions reporting that the "Kuwaiti public including other Arabs was still immensely pleased with [the] Iraqi revolt," Seelye, Consul Kuwait to the Secretary of State, July 24, 1958, no. 16, Secret, 787.00/7-2458.

more convincing linkage between the U.S. military operation in Lebanon and the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy is the fact that Eisenhower and Dulles had persistently turned down Lebanese President Camille Chamoun's requests that U.S. troops intervene in the Lebanese civil war, emphasizing that the Lebanese themselves first had to make an effort to resolve the crisis. Secretary of State Dulles had stated in a telegram to Ambassador Robert M. McClintock in Beirut that Chamoun "should be under no misapprehension that U.S. forces can be counted upon to intervene in circumstances where Lebanese forces are unwilling to fight."⁴⁸⁶ Dulles's telegram of May 23 is a clear indication that the United States would not intervene in the Lebanese crisis. The key words are "circumstances where Lebanese forces are unwilling to fight." The U.S. position was that the crisis could be resolved by military force, whereas the Lebanese commander in chief General Fouad Chehab emphasized that the Army should not intervene militarily in the constitutional conflict and the civil war. Ambassador McClintock took the position that the United States should not intervene in the crisis.⁴⁸⁷ American policies towards Lebanon prior to July 15 thus clearly suggest that the United States did not wish to get involved in the Lebanese civil war.

If the American intervention in Lebanon was a reaction to the Iraqi Revolution, as argued in the above paragraph, there were weighty reasons for not invading Iraq. In a report to the Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research section the case is laid out against an invasion:

⁴⁸⁶ John P. Glennon, editor in chief, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960, vol. xi, Lebanon and Jordan (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1992), Document 49, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Lebanon, Washington, May 23, 1958-8:14 p.m. At the same time, however, Eisenhower was concerned that American inaction in Lebanon might instill fear in American allies that the United States was not prepared to protect them if need be.

⁴⁸⁷ Zachary Karabell, Architects of Intervention: The United States, the Third World, and the Cold War, 1946-1962 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), p. 161.

There is...almost nothing left of the Royal regime in Iraq around which opponents of the new Republic could rally...Under these circumstances, ...any move by force from the outside into Iraq would meet with very little Iraqi support and its success would be highly unlikely. Furthermore, since the signing of the Mutual Defense Agreement yesterday, Nasser and the Syrians would promptly come to the aid of the Republic of Iraq. Lastly, Soviet or Bloc reaction...would undoubtedly take more concrete form depending upon the type of the invasion. Although avoiding the serious risk of a general war, the results of this would be of the utmost seriousness in the Near East, and might well spread elsewhere.⁴⁸⁸

The report presents a number of compelling arguments against an invasion, the foremost of which suggests that within less than a week after the revolution U.S. analysts had realized that the Qasim regime enjoyed popular support and that the insignificant number of loyalists to the old regime remaining in Iraq were not in a position to mount a counter-coup.

The U.S. fear of an escalation of the tense situation in the Middle East in the event of an American invasion of Iraq, was reinforced by the likely reactions of the United Arab Republic and the Soviet Union, which played an important role in reducing the feasibility of an American military operation to restore the Iraqi monarchy to power. The Mutual Defense Agreement signed by the United Arab Republic and Iraq on July 19, 1958 is referred to in the above U.S. analysis as a fact which constituted a threat to any American military action in Iraq.⁴⁸⁹ Furthermore, Washington feared that the Soviet Union would not constrain itself to mere diplomatic protests in the event of a U.S. invasion and that the

⁴⁸⁸ Hugh S. Cumming to Mr. Reinhardt, Department of State, the Director of Intelligence and Research, July 20, 1958, Secret, 787.00/7-2058. An undated British draft analysis, possibly prepared about July 24, 1958, of the situation in Iraq concurs largely with the American assessment, stating that "The great majority of the younger generation of educated Arabs now probably support, at least in theory, an Arab Nationalist Radical programme containing the following main elements: anti-imperialism, hostility to Israel, social reform and redistribution of wealth, Arab unity in some form, neutrality between the Great Power blocs. It is against this background that the revolution in Iraq must be considered...There is no focus around which any counter-revolutionary movement could build up in Iraq at present nor is it likely to appear in the foreseeable future. It seems clear that no operation to reverse the situation in Iraq could be mounted by Jordan with any prospect of success," The Immediate Outlook in Iraq. FO371/134201.

⁴⁸⁹ Hugh S. Cumming to Mr. Reinhardt, Department of State, the Director of Intelligence and Research, July 20, 1958, Secret, 787.00/7-2058.

tension which the military option would cause, “might well spread elsewhere.”⁴⁹⁰ The American analysis appears to be convincing, but an in-depth assessment of the enumerated threats might yield other conclusions.

The military threat to the stability in the Middle East from the United Arab Republic and the Soviet Union in the event of an American invasion of Iraq would most likely have been of a limited nature, whereas the real threat to the region and to Western allies in the Middle East would have emanated from public opinion in these countries.⁴⁹¹ Egyptian military units had been deployed to northern Syria as early as October 1957.⁴⁹² These units in combination with Syrian forces could have provided assistance across the Syrian-Iraqi border to the Qasim regime against invading U.S. forces. Conversely, the absence of contiguity between the northern and southern regions of the United Arab Republic would, however, deprive these forces of strategic depth due to hostile governments in the states which separated these two regions from one another. Furthermore, the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean and the British Royal Navy in the Persian Gulf would be in a position to prevent any Egyptian or Soviet ships from reaching Syrian and Iraqi ports. This would certainly have resulted in an escalation of a local crisis into a regional one, and a confrontation with the Soviet Union. The latter power had demonstrated during the Suez Crisis, however, that it was not able to back up its verbal warnings to Britain and France with military power. A problem for the Kremlin was that the absence of contiguity between the Soviet Union and Iraq made it almost

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ The Suez Crisis in 1956 had had undesired consequences for Britain, the United States, and their ally Nuri al-Sa'id. In the case of the latter the Israeli-British-French attack against Egypt had unleashed violent anti-Western demonstrations. A large-scale Western military operation in Iraq would most likely have had a destabilizing effect on the situation in the Middle East, and policymakers would therefore have had to consider the political price of military action.

⁴⁹² Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, p. 316.

impossible for the U.S.S.R. to intervene militarily in Iraq or supply Qasim with military equipment.⁴⁹³ The conclusion is therefore that it was the prospect of widespread support for Qasim in the Middle East in general, and in Iraq in particular, which convinced the American leaders that invasion was not a feasible option.⁴⁹⁴

The decision of the United States and Britain to take action in Lebanon and Jordan suggests a common approach to what was perceived as a crisis in Iraq, but there were clear differences in the two powers' appraisal of the situation in Iraq. As late as during a conversation in Washington in December of 1958 between British Embassy officials and Stuart Rockwell, the head of the Near East Office in the Department of State, the former expressed concern "lest the U.S. and the U.K. might be differently appraising the situation in Iraq."⁴⁹⁵ A Foreign Office analysis referred to by the British officials argued that it was important to Western interests that Qasim pursue policies, the aim of which was to prevent communist or Nasserist control of Iraq. In the eyes of the Foreign Office Nasserist control would not be better than strong communist influence over Iraqi policymaking. Fully aware of the grave implications of communist control in the long run, the British contended that "a UAR.-controlled Iraq Government would be 'hardly

⁴⁹³ Moscow could, however, have amassed troops along the Turkish or Iranian border in order to demonstrate its displeasure and thereby score points in a propaganda war against Washington.

⁴⁹⁴ Furthermore, the disastrous consequences of the Suez Crisis for Britain's standing in the Middle East most likely served as a deterrent. Also, the Iraqi Army would certainly have offered resistance to an invading Western force, in particular if assisted by Syrian and Egyptian troops. Such a scenario would indubitably have convicted the United States in the court of Middle Eastern public opinion and created difficulties for Western allies, such as Jordan and Lebanon, in the form of widespread public support for their Arab brethren in Iraq. Finally, by the evening of the first day of the Revolution Ambassador Gallman had reported to the Department of State that there was considerable enthusiasm for the coup in Baghdad, and that the support for it in the provinces most likely was the same. Three weeks later he confirmed that "the public's and army's support for the coup had been immediate and complete," Gallman to the Secretary of State, Secret, August 4, 1958, 787.00/8-458, Gallman to the Department of State, Secret, July 14, 1958, 11:00 p.m., 787.00/7-1458.

⁴⁹⁵ Stuart W. Rockwell, Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, December 1, 1958, 787.00/12-158 Subject: Situation in Iraq. Participants: Mr. Roger Jackling, British Embassy, Mr. Willie Morris, British embassy, NE – Stuart W. Rockwell.

less dangerous' than a Communist-controlled one."⁴⁹⁶ Rockwell entirely disagreed with this assessment, arguing that "UAR control would be greatly preferable, especially since short runs have the habit of turning into long runs when the Communists get their hands on a country."⁴⁹⁷ Rockwell stated that the more the communists consolidated their position in Iraq, the more difficult Qasim would find it to assert himself. This conversation between representatives of the two Western allies revealed a fundamental divergence of opinion with respect to the Iraqi situation.

Reactions in the Region

Official reactions to the Iraqi Revolution from the Northern Tier and Jordan were considerably more alarmist than those in London and Washington. The response of Iraq's former Baghdad Pact allies to the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy was generally that the Pact should adopt interventionist policies in order to remove the new regime. Turkey, Pakistan, and Jordan, Iraq's former partner in the Arab Union but not in the Baghdad Pact, pressed so eagerly for military intervention that the Turkish government had to be restrained by Washington.⁴⁹⁸ On July 24 a number of Middle Eastern ambassadors

⁴⁹⁶ Stuart W. Rockwell, Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, December 1, 1958, 787.00/12-158 Subject: Situation in Iraq. Participants: Mr. Roger Jackling, British Embassy, Mr. Willie Morris, British embassy, NE – Stuart W. Rockwell.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ In a telegram to the American Embassy in Teheran Secretary Dulles informed the Ambassador that the United States had expressed its concern, shared by the Iranian shah and Pakistani President, Iskander Mirza, to the Turkish government regarding possible Turkish military intervention in Iraq, Dulles to the American Embassy Tehran, July 23, 1958, Top Secret, 787.00/7-2358. Concern about the Turkish plans was also conveyed to the Department of State by the American Ambassador to France, who believed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's unity would be undermined as a result of other NATO members' opposition to such a move, not only within the framework of the Treaty Organization, but also in the United Nations, and the United States and United Kingdom would be isolated if they supported a Turkish invasion. The ambassador's concluding remark was: "I strongly hope [the] Turks can be dissuaded," Burgess, Paris to the Secretary of State, July 18, 1958 no. POLTO 256, Top Secret, 787.00/7-1858. A possible reason for the Turkish advocacy of intervention was the fear of the creation of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq, southeastern Turkey, and northwestern Iran. A conversation between the Turkish

expressed to the American Ambassador to Spain that the United States ought to have allowed the Baghdad Pact countries to reinstate the old Iraqi regime within 24 hours after the coup. The Turkish ambassador even boasted that the armed forces of his country could have undertaken this task single-handedly.⁴⁹⁹ The assessment of the Middle Eastern ambassadors was that the Soviet Union would not have resorted to force to assist the new government in Baghdad in the event of an invasion, since no vital Soviet interest would have been at stake and Soviet power was inferior to that of the United States. The ambassadors also argued that this still held true, ten days after the coup. Furthermore, the diplomats informed the U.S. ambassador that the prestige of the United States and Britain was low in the Middle East due to doubts about their sincerity to protect their allies in the region against “Russian domination.”⁵⁰⁰ The assessment referred to in this paragraph suggests that Allied and American views on what should be done with respect to Iraq differed radically.⁵⁰¹

Ambassador to the United States, Ali Urguplu, and American diplomats in Washington, revealed that Egyptians, according to Urguplu, were inciting a Kurdish movement for independence in northwestern Iran. In view of the presence of 5-6 million Kurds in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey the alleged Egyptian activities were perceived in Ankara as a serious threat to the stability of the Turkish state. In the eyes of the Turkish government, this threat must be eliminated by any means, including “decisive action,” J. F. O’Grady, Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, July 23, 1958, M-777, Secret, 788.00/7-2358, Subject: Kurdish activity and Conditions in Iran. Participants: Mr. Ali S. H. Urguplu, Turkish Ambassador, Under Secretary, Mr. Stuart Rockwell, Director NE, Mr. John F. O’Grady, GTI [The GTI is the abbreviation for The Office of Greek, Turkish, and Iranian Affairs, in the State Department’s Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs.]

⁴⁹⁹ Ambassador John Davis Lodge, Madrid to Secretary of State, July 24, 1958, no. 99, Confidential, 787.00/7-2458.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid. In the case of one Iranian general the doubts about the sincerity of Western powers even went as far as suggesting that “the British had engineered the Iraqi coup d’état and the new Government were the newly chosen instrument of the British,” Stevens, Teheran to the Foreign Office, July 26, 1958, No. 607, Confidential, FO371/134201. The existence of such an interpretation of the coup is confirmed in an American Embassy report stating that “Public opinion on Iraq is divided generally into two groups—those who believe the coup was genuine, perhaps enjoying the incidental support of the Soviets and the UAR, and those who believe that the coup was engineered and directed by the US, the UK, or both,” John W. Bowling, First Secretary, Tehran to the Department of State, September 17, 1958, Despatch no. 211, Confidential, 787.00/9-1758 Subject: Iranians View on the Situation in Iraq.

⁵⁰¹ Neither the Americans nor the British advocated intervention in Iraq.

Pakistani intelligence, which apparently was advocating a line different from that of President Mirza, and Jordanian diplomats actively supported intervention. Pakistani intelligence recommended that Pakistan, Turkey, and Iran intervene militarily in Iraq—a course of action fully supported by the entire Pakistani Army—at the same time emphasizing the negative Arab reactions which would result from a Western military operation. The American army attaché in Karachi doubted that Pakistan possessed the required logistic capability to carry out the above recommendation, but believed that the sentiments in the Pakistani Army could be exploited, if provided logistic support, to restore the monarchy in Iraq by proxy.⁵⁰² Jordanian diplomats were as active as the Pakistani Army in advocating a military operation against the Qasim regime, however, without concurring in the Pakistani assessment of the detrimental consequences of Western participation in such action against Iraq. The Jordanian chargé d'affaires in Teheran suggested to American diplomats that the United States and Britain provide air cover to a Jordanian operation across the Iraqi-Jordanian border in conjunction with similar Iranian and Turkish moves, and that the British send troops to their bases in al-Habbaniyya and Basra.⁵⁰³ It is obvious from the Turkish, Pakistani, and Jordanian

⁵⁰² James M. Langley, Karachi to the Secretary of State, July 18, 1958, no. 178, Secret, 787.00/7-1858. The military attaché meant with this that in the event of an invasion local powers and not Western powers should launch it, albeit with Western logistical support.

⁵⁰³ Ambassador Edward T. Wailes, Teheran to the Secretary of State, July 19, 1958, no. 191, Confidential, 787.00/7-1958. According to the plan the Jordanian Chargé d'affaires El Tell proposed, Britain would declare officially that it had no interest in removing the revolutionary regime, but once its troops had arrived at their destinations they would take action against the new regime. The Jordanian diplomat further emphasized that Lebanon and Jordan would have to be turned into fortresses unless London and Washington toppled the Qasim regime. Jordan continued to favor intervention well into 1959. In February Jordan had slightly changed its position, opposing American involvement in such an operation. El Tell argued that it would be easier for Jordan, Turkey, and Iran to intervene “now than later when Iraqi Communists would have tightened their grip on Kassem and [the] Iraqi Government,” Wailes, Tehran to the Secretary of States, February 19, 1959, no. G-170, Secret, 787.00/2-1959. Jordanian diplomats continued their alarmist interpretations of Iraqi developments even after Britain and the United States had recognized the Qasim regime. On August 7, 1958 the Jordanian Chargé d’Affaires in Teheran, El Tell, argued that Cairo and Moscow had both been involved in the July 14 Iraqi coup, and that it would not be

assessments above that these were considerably more optimistic with regard to the feasibility of intervention than those made by British and American diplomats.⁵⁰⁴

While Britain and the United States had moved away from the idea of a Western military operation in Iraq at an early stage, the interventionist stance of some of Iraq's neighbors changed little during the fall of 1958.⁵⁰⁵ In November two of Iraq's neighbors still advocated interference in Iraq's domestic affairs to save the country from falling under total communist control. The Turkish ambassador and Iranian chargé d'affaires in Baghdad argued that outside powers must take action soon, recommending that the position of Muhammad Najib al-Rubai'i, President of Sovereignty Council, be built up.⁵⁰⁶ In Karachi a month later President Muhammad Ayub Khan and Foreign Minister Manzur Qadir of Pakistan echoed the above Turkish-Iranian sentiments to the American Ambassador James Langley.⁵⁰⁷ The Pakistani government had a plan, which consisted in

long before the Free Officers were overthrown by the communists. Furthermore, he was convinced that the Shah would soon meet the same fate, Wailes, Tehran to the Secretary of State, August 7, 1958, no. G-16, Confidential, 787.00/8-758.

⁵⁰⁴ It is possible that the rationale for the hard line against Qasim advocated by the Pakistani Army and Jordanian diplomats in part was the hope that the situation in Iraq would produce U.S. supplies of military equipment to Karachi and Amman. Furthermore, for the Jordanian government more than arms was at stake, since the restoration of the Iraqi monarchy and the Arab Union between Jordan and Iraq would guarantee resumption of Iraqi economic assistance to Jordan.

⁵⁰⁵ There was, however, a certain degree of consensus between the Western powers and their Middle Eastern allies to the extent that policymakers both in the West and in the Middle East, with the exception of Jordan, wished to avoid a Western intervention. This testifies to the fact that the objectives of Washington, London, Ankara, Teheran, and Karachi were more or less the same, that is, to prevent destabilization of Middle Eastern pro-West regimes and Soviet inroads into the region. Furthermore, as suggested in the footnote above, most likely West's Middle Eastern allies saw in the Iraqi Revolution an opportunity to exploit West's Cold War preoccupation to their own advantage, meaning demands for military equipment. To a certain extent, the different regional and extra-regional readings of the Iraqi Revolution show that to a certain degree both the Western powers and the Middle Eastern states had their own specific agendas.

⁵⁰⁶ Chargé d'Affaires David Fritzlan, Baghdad to the Secretary of State, November 22, 1958, no. 1655, Secret, 787.00/11-2258. Fritzlan doubted the feasibility of this plan and argued that the best policy to follow was the present one, which aimed at maintaining "friendly relations with Qasim's government and refraining from any activity whatsoever which could give grounds for charges of intervention or exercise of improper influence."

⁵⁰⁷ Langley, Karachi to the Secretary of State, December 22, 1958, no. 1481, Secret, 787.00/12-2258. The two argued that some counter action must be taken to stop the communists in Iraq. Pakistan and its allies, including the United States, must prevent the situation from deteriorating further.

encouraging Nasser to intervene, but it needed the moral support of the United States, Turkey, and Iran to approach Nasser with such a proposal. Karachi did not have in mind an approach in concert with the other three powers, however, contending that intervention by these powers would “only cause [the] wrong reaction in [the] circumstances,” although Ayub and Qadir conceded that U.A.R.-Pakistani relations left much to desire.⁵⁰⁸ The fact that the government of Pakistan insisted on relegating other powers to a secondary role combined with the circumstance that relations with Nasser were not at their best at the time suggest that the plan was not well thought out and that Pakistan’s motives might not be entirely altruistic.⁵⁰⁹

In contrast to the stance taken by Turkey, the Pakistani Army, and Jordan, some Arab states made efforts to downplay the threat posed to Western interests by the Iraqi Revolution. An American Embassy report dated July 19 states that Moroccan ambassador to Iran El Fassi had expressed approval of the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy, emphasizing that the leaders of the old regime, “as criminals to the people,” had deserved to be killed. Furthermore, the ambassador had made clear that the United States should not be concerned about developments in Iraq, since the new regime had announced that the oil industry would not be nationalized.⁵¹⁰ Similarly, President Nasser reassured the West during a visit to Syria on July 20 that the new Iraqi government had no intention to stop the flow of oil and that Western interests, thus, were not endangered. At the same time he tried to mobilize international sympathy for the Iraqi Revolution hinting at the

⁵⁰⁸ Langley, Karachi to the Secretary of State, December 22, 1958, no. 1481, Secret, 787.00/12-2258.

⁵⁰⁹ The different readings of the Iraqi Revolution show that to a certain degree both the West and its Middle Eastern allies had their own specific agendas ranging from a gradually increasing Anglo-American reluctance to use Western force to a marked willingness among allies in the Middle East to use regional, and in the case of Jordan, Western force as well.

⁵¹⁰ Wailes, Tehran to the Secretary of State, July 19, 1958, no. 182, Limited official use, 787.00/7-1958.

possibility of Western interference.⁵¹¹ Thus, in contrast with the governments of Turkey and Jordan, and the Pakistani Army, there were other governments in the region which argued that the Qasim regime constituted no threat to vital Western interests, since it had publicly announced that it would neither nationalize the Iraq Petroleum Company, nor discontinue the flow of oil to the West, apparently regarding oil as the sole Western legitimate interest in Iraq.

Other Western and Soviet Reactions

At least one Western European ally of the United States was clearly concerned about the belligerent stance on the Iraqi Revolution taken by certain quarters in Turkey, Jordan, and Pakistan. A telegram from the U.S. permanent representative to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Paris dated July 21, 1958 reports that Bonn was concerned about a possible Western or proxy action against the new regime in Baghdad. The German assessment was that the new Iraqi regime was pro-Nasser but not pro-communist. The “rebels” could, however, “be pushed into communist arms by calling them pro-communist...”⁵¹² The alternate German permanent representative, Herbert Schworbel, had stressed that “There must be no action by anyone against Iraq unless [they were] ready to risk [a] major war with Russia.” Schworbel had also stated that the West must avoid forcing the Qasim regime to request Soviet military assistance, since Western support for Jordanian military action against Iraq would give the latter the right to request Soviet help, probably in the form of air intervention. The German concern described

⁵¹¹ Ambassador Raymond A. Hare, Cairo to Secretary of State, July 20, 1958, no. 213, Limited official use, 787.00/7-2058.

⁵¹² From the U.S. Permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization] Paris to the Secretary of State, no. POLTO 284, July 21, 1958, Secret, 787.00/7-2158

above is an indication that one of America's important allies feared that Anglo-American policies in the Middle East risked increased tension in East-West relations, which would most likely affect Germany. It is obvious from the above that West Germany's position as a "front state" in the Cold War influenced her policies not only towards neighbors but also towards distant geographic regions.

German concerns with respect to military action against Iraq had been conveyed to the Department of State as early as July 18, when the Department had denied that the United States was under pressure from Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, and Israel to intervene in Iraq.⁵¹³ The American denial was disingenuous, since it has been established above that the Turkish government and the Pakistani Army strongly advocated intervention, albeit without U.S. involvement and against the wishes of the Eisenhower administration. On this occasion the German Minister in Washington, Franz Krapf, had told William Rountree, the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, that the German government fully understood the American position in Lebanon, despite the critical stance of the German press, but was concerned lest the area of conflict be extended to Iraq. Rountree concluded the conversation by emphasizing that the United States "had been for some time sympathetic to Arab nationalism, " but was "opposed to actions by Arab nationalists, which exposed the area to Communist penetration."⁵¹⁴ Rountree's comment reveals a more nuanced view on Arab nationalism than in 1957 when the United States had made efforts to overthrow the Syrian government. This

⁵¹³ The Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, July 18, 1958, Confidential, 787.00/7-1858. Subject: Middle East, Participants: Mr. Franz Krapf, German Minister, William N. Rountree, NEA, Frederick Jandrey, EUR, Robert Houghton, NE.

⁵¹⁴ The Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, July 18, 1958, Confidential, 787.00/7-1858. Subject: Middle East, Participants: Mr. Franz Krapf, German Minister, William N. Rountree, NEA, Frederick Jandrey, EUR, Robert Houghton, NE.

reevaluation of Arab nationalism only went so far, however, since Washington still assessed all Arab nationalist actions in Cold War terms, which is obvious from Rountree's statement.

As could have been expected, the Soviet Union welcomed the Iraqi Revolution, since it held out the prospect of reorienting Iraq's domestic and foreign policies and weakening the Western position in the Middle East due to Leftist influence in the new government. This interpretation of the events of July 14 was clearly reflected in a comment in the Soviet newspaper Pravda of August 2, 1958:

The victory of the national revolution in Iraq cannot fail—in a profound manner—to disrupt the control of imperialism over all of the Middle East...The victory of the national revolution in Iraq has again shown that in the present conditions of existence of the mighty socialist camp, the revolutionary forces which come out against imperialism by far surpass the reactionary forces of imperialism...[T]he revolutionary movement in colonies and dependent countries is part of the world socialist revolution.⁵¹⁵

This quotation establishes that the Iraqi Revolution was regarded in Moscow as strengthening the socialist camp at the expense of “imperialist,” that is Anglo-American, forces in the Middle East.⁵¹⁶

The American intervention in Lebanon, a result of serious concern about the possibility of widespread instability in the Middle East, Soviet condemnation of the U.S. military operation, and Israeli concern about instability in Jordan all contributed to strident rhetoric. On August 15 the U.S.S.R. made a thinly veiled threat with regard to the American military presence in Lebanon:

⁵¹⁵ Pravda, August 2, 1958, p. 3.

⁵¹⁶ Khrushchev appears, however, initially to have doubted that the Iraqi Revolution was a victory for communism, although he had regarded the Revolution as a step in the right direction, Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, Khrushchev's Cold War: The Inside Story of an American Adversary (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), p. 159.

But now every one knows that the true objective of the imperialists is to suppress the national liberation movement in the Middle East...Our state cannot be indifferent to the source of a serious military threat emerging in the direct vicinity of its borders. It is natural that, under such conditions countries adjacent to the Near and Middle East must take measures to insure their own and the common security.⁵¹⁷

It is not clear what measures Moscow had in mind, and it is possible that the Soviet Union was merely attempting to repeat its propaganda victory from the Suez Crisis, when the Russians had issued warnings to the effect that they might use missiles against Paris and London, without, however, backing these threats up with any military preparations. The serious military threat referred to in the above quotation was the landing of U.S. Marines in Lebanon, but this force numbering 15,000 troops did not in itself pose a threat to the Soviet Union.⁵¹⁸

Other air force and naval movements in the region, however, appeared more menacing to the Soviet Union. A Bulgarian intelligence report of July 21 states that a substantial part of the American Sixth Fleet, including aircraft carriers, had anchored off the coast of Lebanon, and U.S. fighters and bombers had flown in to the Turkish airbase of Adana from Spain and North Africa. Part of the British Mediterranean fleet had also sailed for the coast of Lebanon, and British paratroops had been deployed to Jordan. Turkey had

⁵¹⁷ Pravda, August 15, 1958, p. 1.

⁵¹⁸ Pravda explained the U.S. intervention in Lebanon as follows: "The American imperialists are attempting to strengthen their aggressive colonialist policy with the so-called theory of vacuum, advanced by Dulles in his book War or Peace According to this theory, if the old colonial powers lose their positions somewhere on this planet, an alleged vacuum will emerge, which will have to be filled by the United States." The newspaper concluded that the U.S. military presence in Lebanon was an example of the "theory of vacuum," Pravda, August 22, 1958, p. 4. As early as July 18, Dulles himself had doubted that the Soviet Union would intervene militarily in the Middle East as a result of the American intervention in Lebanon, Russel Baker, "Dulles Doubtful of Soviet Action," New York Times, July 19, 1958, referred to in Fursenko and Naftali, Khrushchev's Cold War, p. 170. The reason for Dulles's doubts was probably American intelligence, which proved that the Soviet Union did not possess a sufficient number of long-range bombers or long-range missiles to fight a successful war with the United States, Fursenko and Naftali, Khrushchev's Cold War, p. 177. Conversely, on the same or the following day Khrushchev had been convinced that a Western attack on Iraq was imminent, Fursenko and Naftali, Khrushchev's Cold War, p. 172.

carried out a partial mobilization and prepared to deploy 8th Army Corps to the Syrian border. The Israeli Defense Force had been placed on alert and a partial mobilization had been carried out on July 17. In Italy no leaves were granted to military personnel and anti-American and anti-British demonstrations took place following the intervention in Lebanon. The United Arab Republic carried out a partial mobilization as well, and Egypt deployed an armored division to the Israeli border.⁵¹⁹ The Israeli government's concern referred to in the Bulgarian report was confirmed when Israeli Foreign Minister Golda Meir told reporters at a press conference in London on August 11 that Israel would take "serious steps" if the Arab Republic or Iraq "interfered in" Jordan.⁵²⁰ The intelligence and newspaper reports painted a picture of nervous tension and rhetoric, with the two Western powers and their allies preparing for a worst-case scenario.

The above analysis of international reactions to the Iraqi Revolution has so far established that a decision was made early on in Washington and London not to intervene in Iraq against the new regime. This decision grew out of a realization that the overthrow of the monarchy was a political, economic, and social revolution supported by most political parties and an overwhelming majority of the population. Early diplomatic reports from Baghdad and official statements by the Qasim regime confirmed this picture and reinforced the impression that a Western military invasion was not feasible. Since the conclusion was that the new regime in Baghdad would not easily be unseated, a

⁵¹⁹ Ministry of Internal Affairs, Memorandum no. 00428 [in Bulgarian], July 21, 1958, Top Secret, Special Information No. 5 from General I. Mikhailov. Identifier: 60526451-96B6-175C-97445D025767184C. Available from Cold War International History Project http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=60526451-96B6-175C-97445D025767184C&sort=Collection&item=Bulgaria%20in%20the%20Cold%20War accessed on September 21, 2007.

⁵²⁰ New York Herald Tribune, quoted in Izvestia, August 13, 1958, p. 5. The Israeli position on Jordan had also been referred to by Robert Murphy who had informed the United Arab Republic during his visit to Cairo that if British forces withdrew from Jordan and King Hussein was overthrown as a result, it could lead to Israeli military action.

pragmatic approach to dealing with the revolutionary government had to be worked out. This process ended in recognition of the Republic of Iraq less than three weeks after the July 14 revolution. Iraq's neighbors and former allies generally took a more aggressive stance on intervention than the United States and Britain, but they also gradually moved towards recognition.

Recognition

Despite the initially belligerent stance taken by some of Iraq's former Baghdad Pact allies they gradually, like Britain and the United States, moved towards extending recognition to the new regime in Baghdad, however, only after a great number of non-Western states had already recognized the Qasim regime.⁵²¹ By the end of July Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan had indicated at a Baghdad Pact meeting in London that they "favored early recognition" of the Qasim regime, about July 31, news which had come "contrary to" Secretary Dulles's "expectations."⁵²² As late as July 24 several Middle Eastern ambassadors had expressed views regarding the desirability of intervention in Iraq. American concerns about such views conveyed to at least one Middle Eastern government, might have contributed in part to the decision by the three allies to recognize

⁵²¹ By July 23 the following countries had recognized Iraq: The United Arab Republic, Yemen, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, the People's Republic of China, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Albania, Mongolia, North Korea, East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Indonesia, North Vietnam, and Sudan, Baghdad to the Secretary of State, July 23, 1958, no. 354, Confidential, 787.00/7-2358. On July 26 Gallman reported from Baghdad that 21 states had recognized the Republic of Iraq, with Saudi Arabia and Ceylon being the most recent governments to extend recognition, Gallman to the Secretary of State, July 26, 1958, no. 437, Confidential, 787.00/7-2658.

⁵²² Matthew Loomam, the Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, July 30, 1958, no. M-597, Confidential, 787.02/7-3058 Subject: Recognition of Iraq Government. Participants: French Ambassador Hervé Alphand, The Secretary, Mr. Foy D. Kohler, Deputy Assistant Secretary, EUR, Mr. Matthew Loomam, WE.

the new regime in Baghdad.⁵²³ Interestingly, this “unexpected” decision suggests that Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan had acted to a certain extent independently of the United States and Britain. Furthermore, they had acted contrary to the wishes of the Eisenhower administration which initially had not favored early recognition. Their recognition of the Iraqi government was announced on July 31.⁵²⁴ This seemingly unified approach was, however not the result of shared conviction, since the Shah had expressed doubts about the wisdom of early recognition. Furthermore, his opposition to Turkish military action against Iraq also illustrates the fact that all three Baghdad Pact allies acted according to their own agendas.

From early on the British and American approaches to recognition of the Qasim regime differed. As early as July 23 a British official in the Commonwealth Relations Office had expressed in a conversation with an American Embassy officer the view that “early recognition [of] the Iraqi regime [was] highly desirable.”⁵²⁵ The reason for the British position on recognition was that the regime appeared to be in firm control of Iraq and that there was no discernible internal challenge to its authority. Generally, Britain and the United States followed two different policies regarding recognition of governments. The British had traditionally extended recognition regardless of whether they approved of a regime. Conversely, to the Americans the question of whether they approved of a regime was crucial for recognition. Furthermore, the British official had

⁵²³ See the discussion above under the heading “Reactions in the Region.”

⁵²⁴ Embassy Tehran to the Secretary of State, July 30, 1958, No. 291, Secret, 787.00/7-3058. In a conversation with the American Ambassador to Iran on the previous day, the Shah had expressed that he had only reluctantly decided to go along with recognition, so as “not to be left behind Turkey and Pakistan.” The Shah would have preferred to adopt a wait-and-see attitude. With regard to Turkish intervention, the Iranian monarch had based his opposition to the Turkish plans on doubts about whether the Turks possessed the capability to carry out a military operation, and on the conviction that they were thoroughly disliked by Iraqis and would encounter stiff opposition, predicting that such an operation would be similar to the Soviet crushing of the Hungarian uprising in 1956.

⁵²⁵ Whitney, London to the Secretary of State, July 23, 1958, no. 516, Secret, 787.00/7-2358

argued that delay in recognition would increase the “prospect [of] communist or UAR orientation [of the] Iraqi government.”⁵²⁶ Also, recognition would strengthen the hands of the moderate individuals within the regime who “are not unfavorable to [the] West.”⁵²⁷ In addition to the above arguments, the British also appeared to have other weighty reasons for early recognition, such as continued Iraqi commercial and financial relations with Britain and a possible arrangement at the air base of al-Habbaniyya on the same basis as before. The above arguments for recognition suggest that much more was at stake for Britain than for the United States in Iraq, and that the British were hoping to achieve some form of continuity in their relations with Baghdad.⁵²⁸

The Eisenhower administration placed considerably less trust in the Iraqi government than the British did. The American Embassy in London assessed that the new Iraqi regime was extreme and Nasserist in nature, that it would join the United Arab Republic in the immediate future, and that it would emulate Nasser’s cooperation with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, American diplomats in London were seriously concerned about “the decrease in life expectancy of [the] remaining pro-West Arab regimes,” and were convinced that Nasser and Khrushchev were the new regime’s mentors.⁵²⁹ Conversely,

⁵²⁶ Whitney, London to the Secretary of State, July 23, 1958, No. 516, Secret, 787.00/7-2358.

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

⁵²⁸ Gallman to the Secretary of State, July 27, 1958, no. 442, Secret, 787.00/7-2758. For the Foreign Office from Ambassador Wright. The British ambassador stated in the telegram that “If some form of recognition either complete or progressive is accorded soon it is possible if not probable not only that commercial and financial relations with Britain and with the West will continue but that arrangements at Habbaniya and for BLPI may settle back onto something like same basis as before.” His optimism with regard to al-Habbaniyya appears, even without the benefit of hindsight, completely unwarranted in view of official declarations of the new regime and the “anti-imperialist” rhetoric in Iraqi newspapers. A meeting between the Oriental Counselor at the British Embassy, Samuel Falle, and Muhammad Mahdi Kubba, member of the Sovereignty Council, on the following day most likely further encouraged the British to extend early recognition to the Qasim regime. Kubba had stated with respect to communist influence that “the Arabs had no intention of exchanging one form of Imperialism for another,” Wright to the Foreign Office, July 28, 1958, No. 1301, Confidential, FO371/134201. Falle’s assessment was that “the new Administration are keen to establish normal friendly relations with the West.”

⁵²⁹ Whitney, London to the Secretary of State, July 22, 1958, no. 481, Secret, 787.00/7-2258.

British analysts believed that the Iraqi communists were disorganized, lacked strong leadership due to the previous regime's suppression of their party, and that their position in Iraq would be similar to that of Egyptian communists who were persecuted by Nasser. Furthermore, there was no evidence that the Qasim regime was "taking directions from Nasser," but Foreign Office officials assessed that the U.A.R. president would attempt to "make every effort to achieve a dominating influence."⁵³⁰ Also, the British believed that the £96 million of Iraqi sterling balances in London were an excellent incentive for the new regime to maintain good relations with Britain. Finally, the fact that the Iraqi Army was British trained and equipped was believed to play into the hands of London.⁵³¹ Juxtaposed the American and the British analyses show fundamental differences in the assessment of the Iraqi regime, largely due to the different nature of the two Western powers' relations with the previous regime.⁵³²

American and British assessments of the situation in Iraq continued to be at variance during the spring of 1958. In April 1959 Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs stated that the British feared an Iraq controlled by Nasser as much as one controlled by the communists, with London arguing that the West should continue to extend support to Qasim, even considering the possibility of arms aid, in order to reduce his dependence on the communists. Washington believed, however, that Qasim's regime

⁵³⁰ The Immediate Outlook in Iraq. FO371/134201 A draft analysis of the situation in Iraq dated about July 24.

⁵³¹ This circumstance later proved to be a minor consideration when Soviet advisors and arms began to arrive in Iraq, although it might have had an initial significance.

⁵³² Despite these differences American recognition of the Republic of Iraq on August 2, 1958, came only a day after that of the British, The Iraq Times, August 2, 1958, p. 1. It is quite possible that the sheer number of governments, including the British, (30 in all by August 1 according The Iraq Times, August 1, 1958, p. 2), which had recognized the new republic, contributed to the American decision. The British argument that Western refusal to recognize the new regime would eventually drive it into the arms of the Soviet Union most likely also played a role in the American decision. For this British argument, see the second paragraph above under the heading "U.S. and British Reactions."

already was “almost completely under Communist control.”⁵³³ It was therefore deemed necessary to take a firmer line to prompt him to take action against the communists before it was too late. Rountree did not elaborate on what type of action he had in mind, but he believed that the influence of Nasser and Arab nationalism could undermine the position of the communists. Rountree’s assessment testifies to the fact that the American crusade against communism and Britain’s troubled relationship with Nasser largely dictated their policies in the Middle East and to a certain extent constituted an obstacle to complete agreement on what should be done about the Iraqi regime.

Despite Anglo-American differences with regard to the best approach to dealing with the Qasim regime and communist influence over Iraqi policies both powers subscribed to the conviction that the West should not intervene in Iraq. Ambassador John D. Jernegan illustrated this point in a telegram dated January 13, 1959:

2) If...we admit that Q is [a] Communist or that [a] “point of no return” has been reached, there would seem to be little...capability on [the] part of [the] US or UK to take effective countermeasures in Iraq. 3) We must recognize that Iraq has become almost entirely an Arab problem and that its solution must rest essentially with Iraqis and other Arabs....[A]ny solution must be compatible with Arab nationalism. However, we doubt that in the long run integration into [the] UAR and control by Nasser would be [an] acceptable solution to Iraqis generally. 4) ... [W]e should be careful not to appear to oppose any moves Nasser may make to correct matters....At the same time we should avoid becoming identified with or involved in any maneuvers Nasser may undertake as regards Iraq.⁵³⁴

This passage is evidence of the realization that direct or indirect Western intervention in Iraq would be highly counterproductive. The preferred American approach to Qasim constituted, however, a delicate tightrope act, since it involved both supporting Nasser and not being identified with his anti-Qasim policies.

⁵³³ William M. Rountree, NEA, the Department of State to Assistant Secretary Mr. Greene, April 23, 1959, Secret, 787.00/4-2359.

⁵³⁴ John D. Jernegan to the Secretary of State, January 13, 1959, no. 2057, Top Secret, 787.00/1-1359.

This chapter has advanced the argument that there were fundamental differences between U.S. and British reactions to the Iraqi Revolution. Both powers were agreed that a continued and unimpeded flow of oil from the Middle East was crucial to Western Europe's economic survival. American access to alternative oil fields made it less dependent on the Middle East in this respect. Britain's position as a key ally to the United States, however, made her economic survival an American concern as well. At the same time the British dependence on oil also prompted Britain to adopt a more pragmatic position than the United States on policies towards the Qasim regime. Recognition of the new government in Baghdad therefore became less of an ideological Cold War problem to London than to Washington, since the former wished to return to business as usual as soon as possible. Furthermore, Britain's considerable economic and military presence in Iraq forced her to seek an expeditious accommodation with the revolutionary regime. The debacle at Suez also made London less hesitant to work with a government which was suspected of communist leanings. In British eyes Nasser and not Qasim was the main threat to Britain's position in the Middle East. Diplomatic traditions also enabled the British to take a less ideological approach to Iraq than the United States. The suspicion of communist influence in Baghdad made Washington wish to withhold recognition for the time being.

Despite her reluctance to extend recognition to the new regime in Baghdad the United States ended up recognizing the Republic of Iraq less than three weeks after the revolution following the same decision by the Northern Tier and Britain. There were a number of reasons for this about turn. First the British pushed ahead with recognition on August 1, 1958. Second, the remaining allies in the Baghdad Pact had extended

recognition to the new Iraqi regime on July 31, a measure which, however, did not make Turkey and Pakistan less inclined to advocate intervention in Iraq. Third, all socialist states had already recognized Iraq and the West risked to lose what little influence it still had in Baghdad to the Soviet Bloc. Jordan, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan adopted a more aggressive stance than their Western allies with regard to intervention than the Western powers. There were several reasons for this position. The geographic proximity to Iraq made them more sensitive to developments in a neighboring state. This was the case in Turkey, Iran, and Jordan. All three countries had minorities which might prove susceptible to political propaganda emanating from the nationalist regime in Baghdad. Second, Jordan had lost crucial economic aid from Baghdad when the Arab Union was dissolved as a result of the Iraqi Revolution. Third, The members in the Baghdad Pact saw in the Iraqi Revolution an opportunity to exercise pressure on the United States to grant them increased military aid.

THE QASIM REGIME'S FOREIGN RELATIONS

The paramount position of the British in Iraq prior to July 14, 1958, the increasing American involvement in Middle Eastern affairs, and Iraq's membership in the Baghdad Pact made the possibility of Western intervention and disruptive activities a primary concern of the new republic.⁵³⁵ The task of eliminating this threat was therefore crucial to Qasim, to which fact testifies the first public address of the new regime to the people of Iraq and to the world. For this reason Proclamation No. 1 of July 14, 1958, the first message from the leaders of the revolution read to the Iraqi public on Radio Baghdad, had stated unequivocally that Iraq "will abide by all pledges and pacts consistent with the interests of the country," a subtle message to the Western powers that Iraq would not withdraw from the Baghdad Pact or nationalize the oil industry.⁵³⁶ At the same time, however, the new regime had to take into consideration the sentiments among the Free Officers, in the population at large, and in the political parties which had cooperated with the Free Officers prior to the July 14 events. Considering the above, the questions posed and addressed in this chapter are: Was there a reorientation of Iraq's foreign policy following the July 14 Revolution? If there was, did it constitute a gradual or immediate change, and a radical departure from the foreign policy of Nuri al-Sa'id?⁵³⁷ Iraq's

⁵³⁵ For a detailed discussion of the potential external threats to the Republic of Iraq, see Chapter 9.

⁵³⁶ 14th of July Celebrations Committee, 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution: One Year of Progress and Achievement (Baghdad: The Times Press, n.d.), p. 7.

⁵³⁷ The foreign relations of the Qasim regime have not played a prominent role in Western or Arab scholarship on the Iraqi revolution. The exception is Norman Daniel who devotes fifteen pages to Iraq's foreign relations in his Revolution in Iraq. Daniel's analysis is not very detailed, however, since his book was published in January of 1959. An example of an Arab scholar who has discussed the Qasim era's foreign policy is Muhammad Husain al-Zubaidi in his work on the Iraqi revolution Thawrat 14 Tammuz 1958. Al-Zubaidi's focus is on trade and relations with Kuwait. Former Minister of Economy Ibrahim

diplomatic, trade, and military relations with foreign powers in 1958-1959 will be analyzed, with an emphasis on the first in the context of the foreign policy principles of neutralism and anti-imperialism, which guided Iraq's foreign relations during the Qasim era.

Soviet primary sources suggest that Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev induced Qasim to decide not to withdraw from the Baghdad Pact and not to nationalize the Iraq Petroleum Company.⁵³⁸ Soviet sources indicate that Khrushchev's recommendations were conveyed by Nasser to the new Iraqi regime on July 17 or 18. The analysis in Chapter VIII shows that Qasim's decision had been announced on the morning of July 14. The two dates clearly cast serious doubts on the Soviet claim. Qasim's announcement on July 14 is completely consistent with his subsequent policies, which reflect a personality eager to avoid conflict and taking extreme positions. The Iraqi leader was not in need of Soviet advice to realize that serious consequences would result from challenging Britain. Furthermore, Qasim was not the only Free Officer convinced of the importance of maintaining good relations with Britain. Naji Talib had assured the British in Basra on July 14 that the new regime did not intend to disrupt the flow of oil to the West. He had even arranged transportation for oil workers to get safely to their work place.⁵³⁹ Talib had received no orders from Qasim to take such steps, since

Kubba's book Hadha Huwa Tariq 14 Tammuz: Difa' Ibrahim Kubba Imama Mahkamat al-Thawra [This is the Way of July 14: Ibrahim Kubba's Defense before the Revolutionary Court] (Bairut: Dar al-Tali'a lil-Taba'awa al-Nashr, 1969), which is the defense transcript from his trial, is a detailed analysis of Iraq's foreign trade during his time as minister of economy. Several Western works analyze relations with the United Arab Republic in the context of Arab unity, Nasser's anti-Qasim policies, and attempts to overthrow the Qasim regime.

⁵³⁸ Extract from Protocol 169, Presidium meeting of July 26, 1958, Archives of the President of the Russian Federation, referred to in Fursenko and Naftali, Khrushchev's Cold War, pp. 170.

⁵³⁹ Basil Judd, Consul General, Basra to Wright, July 24, 1958, FO371/134202; al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz 1958, p. 476.

communications with Baghdad had been severed. Khrushchev's recommendations could thus not have been conveyed to Talib.

The fact that the situation in the northern oil fields was similar to that in the South strongly suggests that there was a consensus among certain Free Officers that Britain should not be unduly challenged, and there is nothing to suggest in Western or Arab sources that the Free Officers had been persuaded by Khrushchev to take such steps. There is a remote possibility that Soviet recommendations had been conveyed to Qasim by the Communist Party of Iraq prior to the Revolution, but there is no evidence to this effect in available Arab, Western, or Soviet sources. Furthermore, Hanna Batatu, who argues in The Old Social Classes that Iraqi communists played a prominent role in overthrowing the monarchy, makes no reference to the existence of such Soviet recommendations to Qasim with regard to future policies towards Britain. In view of Batatu's argument, and based on his unprecedented access to Iraqi communist leaders and the leaders of the new regime, Batatu would certainly have provided such evidence in support of his argument. The conclusion here is therefore that Qasim's and a number of Free Officers' position on relations with Britain predated Khrushchev's recommendations, which merely concurred with the views Qasim and these officers already held.

The Qasim regime's relations with the communist countries started off on a positive note, while the opposite was the case with Britain and the United States. By July 23, 1958 most communist countries, the United Arab Republic, Sudan, and Yemen had recognized the new government in Baghdad.⁵⁴⁰ By July 26 as many as 21 states had recognized the

⁵⁴⁰ Baghdad to the Secretary of State, July 23, 1958, no. 354, Confidential, 787.00/7-2358. The United Arab Republic was the first country to recognize the new Iraqi government, followed by Yemen and the Soviet

new republic.⁵⁴¹ Neither Britain nor the United States, or any other Western country for that matter, were among these states.⁵⁴² The fact that the socialist countries were among the first to extend recognition to the republican government was therefore a clear signal that the former were interested in establishing friendly relations with the new Iraqi government. Nuri had severed diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and the reestablished relations with the socialist countries were therefore a policy which took Iraq in a direction opposite to that of the Nuri regime. Furthermore, a British Embassy report dated July 23 is evidence that the Iraqi government was eager to establish normal diplomatic relations with Britain as well and regretted the fact that London had not yet extended recognition to the new government.⁵⁴³ It should therefore not have come as a surprise to the Western powers that this circumstance was added to the grievances of “imperialism” and “exploitation” which the Iraqis felt they had, primarily against Britain, and to a somewhat lesser degree against the United States. As a result of opposition to Nuri’s policies, what was perceived as British and American support for these policies, the strong British presence in Iraq under the previous regime, and the delay in British and American recognition, the new government decided to reorient Iraq’s traditionally pro-West foreign policy.

Union and twelve other communist states. The first Western government to extend recognition to the new regime in Baghdad was Greece, 14th of July Celebrations Committee, The Iraqi Revolution: One Year of Progress and Achievement, Baghdad: The Times Press, 1959, p. 101.

⁵⁴¹ Gallman to the Secretary of State, July 26, 1958, no. 437, Confidential, 787.00/7-2658.

⁵⁴² 14th of July Celebrations Committee, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 101.

⁵⁴³ Ambassador Wright quoted the ministers with whom he had met as follows: “They were sorry that Communist countries had recognized and Britain had not and asked me to represent to you how desirable British recognition was since only on this basis could firm friendship and cooperation be established,” Wright (Emergency Head Quarters) to the Foreign Office, July 23, no. 24, Secret, FO371/134200. The term Emergency Headquarters refers to the hotel the Embassy staff was housed in following the burning of the British Embassy on July 14.

Proclamation No. 1 had stated that anti-imperialism and the principle of neutralism adopted at the Bandung Conference in April 1955 would constitute the two pillars of Iraq's relations with foreign powers. This announcement did not signify that Iraq's new leaders intended to redirect its foreign policy away from a pro-West orientation to a pro-Soviet one. The significance was much more subtle, namely that Qasim intended to pursue a truly neutralist foreign policy, the purpose of which was to maintain friendly relations with all nations, testified to by the British Embassy report referred to above.⁵⁴⁴ It took more than two weeks for Britain and the United States to recognize the new regime. It appears that one reason for the delay could have been lack of information about the new leaders in Baghdad, but recognition could have come earlier, since the new regime had stated unequivocally on the morning of July 14 what policies it intended to pursue. The new regime's acceptance of neutralism as a foundation for its foreign relations was a radical departure from the previous regime's pro-West and anti-Soviet Cold War foreign policy, which had firmly anchored Iraq to the Western camp.

The republican government continued to emphasize to the British ambassador the non-communist nature of its policies in order to bring about early British recognition. Minister of Guidance (Information) Siddiq Shanshal had stressed on July 27 that the new

⁵⁴⁴ Al-Zubaidi, *Thawrat 14 Tammuz 1958*, p. 512; 'Abd al-Karim Qassim, *Press Interviews Granted by Major-General Abdul Karim Qassim, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, to Mr. R Karanjia, Mr. Peter Worthington and Mr. Anthony Nutting at the Ministry of Defense, Baghdad* (Baghdad: The Times Press, n.d.), p. 6. Qasim's foreign policy reflected his domestic policy to the extent that he rejected economic class war. In his speeches he repeatedly emphasized his opposition to division among different social strata, 'Abd al-Karim Qasim, *Principles of the 14th July Revolution* (Baghdad: The Times Press, n.d.), pp. 13-14. In a letter to the Iranian, Turkish, and Pakistani Embassies in Baghdad dated March 24, 1959 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed this official line stating that it was the desire of the Iraqi people "to establish close cooperation between their government and all the states of the world on the basis of friendship, equality and mutual interests, to work towards preserving peace in the world in a way consistent with the principles of the United Nations Charter by adopting a policy of positive neutrality and non-alignment to either the East or the West," 14th of July Celebrations Committee, 1958-1959, *The Iraqi Revolution*, p. 104. The intention of the new government to "remain genuinely neutral" was also conveyed to the British Embassy by the leader of the National Democratic Party, Kamil al-Chaderchi, Wright to the Foreign Office, August 9, 1958, no. 1346, Confidential, FO371/134201.

government encouraged private ownership, which was true, and had argued that “the new régime’s firm intention to resist Communism would be immeasurably strengthened if the West were prepared to cooperate with them.”⁵⁴⁵ Furthermore, Shanshal had told Wright that he hoped the foreign experts would remain in Iraq, a clear hint that the new government wished to maintain friendly relations with Britain, since most foreign experts working in Iraq were British.⁵⁴⁶ There could thus be no doubt in the minds of British diplomats that the Qasim regime wished to maintain continued friendly relations with Britain. This wish might appear somewhat surprising, but the reason was that both the British and the Iraqis would benefit economically from a pragmatic approach to their relations, as neither side wanted to disrupt the flow of oil to the West. The problem from London’s perspective was that it was difficult to assess the extent of Nasserist and communist influence in Baghdad and whether closer ties with the communist countries would materialize from this influence.⁵⁴⁷

Iraqi leaders did not fail to emphasize to the British that present Iraqi policies were a result of earlier Western policies in the Middle East. In a conversation recounted by the British Oriental Counselor Samuel Falle in August 1958, Kamil al-Chadirchi, the leader

⁵⁴⁵ Wright (Emergency H.Q.) to the Foreign Office, July 27, 1958, no. 37, Secret, FO371/134201. Shanshal’s argument had also been the British argument in advocating early recognition during a conversation with an American diplomat as early as July 23, Whitney, London to the Secretary of State, July 23, 1958 No. 516, Secret, 787.00/7-2358. Baghdad’s interest in friendly relations with Britain had according to Norman Daniel, been confirmed by Qasim, who had stated that Iraq wished to keep old friends as well as to make new ones, Caractacus (Norman Daniel), Revolution in Iraq, p. 163.

⁵⁴⁶ Gradually, however, British experts employed by the Iraqi state began to be dismissed in increasing numbers, Caractacus (Daniel), Revolution in Iraq, p. 163. This should not necessarily be perceived as anti-British policies, however, but rather as a natural Iraqization or Arabization process (when foreign experts were replaced with Egyptians or other Arabs) in Iraqi institutions, in particular in cases when Iraqis or Egyptians were perceived as being as qualified as Westerners. Economic considerations also influenced the decision to dismiss Western experts, 14th July Celebrations Committee, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 53; Kubba, Hadha Huwa Tariq 14 Tammuz, pp. 42-44.

⁵⁴⁷ As argued in Chapter 9, the British initially preferred communist influence in the short run to that of Gamal ‘Abdul Nasser, their arch enemy.

of the National Democratic Party, had given him, Falle, a lecture on the Arab interpretation of recent developments in the Middle East:

(A)...The fact that the Arab nationalist movement under the leadership of Nasser inclined towards the Soviet Union was the result of mistaken Western policy, and for example, Suez and Algeria. More recently the landing of American troops in the Lebanon and British troops in Jordan were regarded as acting hostile to Arab nationalism while the Soviet attitude had been one of friendship towards the Arabs. (B) On the Lebanon, Chaderchi was unable to understand why America continued to send troops after the election of General Chehab. Such action only increased the tension in the M.E. and Arab suspicions of Western motives. (C) As for Jordan, it was most desirable that British forces should withdraw and allow a plebiscite to take place in order to decide the future of the country.⁵⁴⁸

Al-Chaderchi had further stated that the presence of British troops in Jordan was considered by Iraqis as a threat to their country. The arguments made by al-Chaderchi were certainly not just his personal opinion but views shared by most Iraqi and Arab nationalists at the time. It is obvious from this conversation that American and British actions in Lebanon and Jordan, intended to stabilize the situation in the Middle East, had had the opposite effect, at least from an Iraqi perspective.⁵⁴⁹

The Qasim regime's relations with the United States were not without problems. The main obstacle to good relations was Prime Minister Qasim's conviction that Washington was involved in subversive activities in his country. U.S. protestations of its innocence did not convince Qasim, who placed more faith in "intelligence" reports.⁵⁵⁰ A State

⁵⁴⁸ Wright to the Foreign Office, August 9, 1958, no. 1346, Confidential, FO371/134201.

⁵⁴⁹ Al-Chaderchi's views from August were echoed exactly a month later by the Baghdad daily Al-Zaman (independent): "The repeated delays in the withdrawal of the Anglo-American forces from Jordan and Lebanon have now become a serious problem with deep impact on any plan to regulate the relations of liberated Arab countries with the West on the basis of positive neutralism, international co-operation and the promotion of world peace," Al-Zaman, October 9, 1958, quoted in The Iraq Times, October 10, 1958, p. 4.

⁵⁵⁰ It is possible that this intelligence had originated in the Soviet Union. In a conversation with the Soviet ambassador to Iraq Qasim had requested that the Soviet Union provide him with intelligence on "the intrigues of the colonialists and their accomplices..." Grigori Titovitch Zaitsev to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, August 24, 1958, Archives of the President of the Russian Federation, quoted in Fursenko and Naftali, Khrushchev's Cold War, p. 183. Zaitsev had arrived in

Department memorandum reports that Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs William Rountree had expressed concern to an Iraqi diplomat in Washington regarding “certain elements...feeding Prime Minister Qasim and the Iraqi public with so-called intelligence reports alleging various US activities against the present regime.”⁵⁵¹ Rountree had told the diplomat that the reports were “completely without foundation.” A few days later Rountree had informed the Embassy in Baghdad that Radio Moscow’s Arabic service had referred to reports in a Beirut newspaper to the effect that a “special American center in Iran has been carrying out large scale activities among Kurds to prepare for [a] Kurdish revolution in Iraq against Qasim’s government.”⁵⁵² As long as Qasim believed that the Central Intelligence Agency. had a thousand agents in the area working to overthrow his regime, it would be extremely difficult for U.S. officials to dispel his suspicions.⁵⁵³ There were, however, positive signs

Baghdad on August 5, 1958, to take up his post as ambassador to Iraq, The Iraq Times, August 6, 1958, p. 3.

⁵⁵¹ Richard B. Parker, NE, the Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, January 1, 1959, no. M-621, Confidential, 787.00/1-759 Subject: Iraq, Participants: Mr. Salih Mahdi, Departing Charge D’affaires, Iraq Embassy; Mr. William M. Rountree, NEA; Mr. Richard B. Parker, NE. In a meeting with State Department officials Turkish Foreign Minister Fatin Rustu Zorlu had indicated that the Soviet Union was sharing intelligence with the Qasim regime, A. Guy Hope, GTI, the Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, April 3, 1959, NATO ministerial meeting April 2-4, 1959, Secret, 787.00/4-35 Subject: Iraq and Iran, Participants: H. E. Fatin Rustu Zorlu, Turkish Foreign Minister; Ali S. H. Urguplu, Turkish Ambassador; the Acting Secretary of State; William M. Rountree, Assistant Secretary, NEA; A. Guy Hope, GTI. His argument had been that on several occasions when the Turks had shared intelligence with Qasim, the Iraqis had proven to be surprisingly well informed.

⁵⁵² William Rountree, NE, the Department of State to American Embassy Baghdad, January 7, 1959, Secret, 787.00/1-759.

⁵⁵³ A. Guy Hope, GTI, the Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, April 3, 1959, NATO ministerial meeting April 2-4, 1959, Secret, 787.00/4-35 Subject: Iraq and Iran, Participants: H. E. Fatin Rustu Zorlu, Turkish Foreign Minister; Ali S. H. Urguplu, Turkish Ambassador; the Acting Secretary of State; William M. Rountree, Assistant Secretary, NEA; A. Guy Hope, GTI. U.S. attempts to dispel Qasim’s suspicions about American intentions with regard to Iraq were not made easier by anti-American articles in the Iraqi press. An example is an article originally published in the Soviet newspaper Pravda on January 8, 1959 and referred to in Al-Zaman on the following day. The article leveled unspecified accusations against American imperialists who under the cover of the anti-communist struggle were attempting to “destroy the achievements of the Iraqi revolution, Al-Zaman, January 9, 1959, p. 1. Two days later an article under the caption “The Objectives of the Neo-Imperialist American Policy in the Arab Countries after the Failure of the Eisenhower Doctrine” argued that “America had not been able to suppress the Arab liberation movement” and “the victory of the Iraqi people in the immortal July 14 revolution and the victory of the

as well. According to a State Department memorandum dated April 2, 1959, “We found in Iraq that we met with apparent good will at the top, as in the Ambassador’s talks with Q[asim] and the Foreign Minister, but that lower down our Embassy continued to be subject to harassment in its operations.”⁵⁵⁴

American attempts to improve relations with Iraq were impeded by the U.S. intervention in Lebanon on July 15, 1958. Opinion pages in the Iraqi press took a firm anti-American position, interpreting the American military operation in Lebanon as a continuation of earlier policies:

The attack on Egypt in 1956 and the intrigues woven in Syria in the past prove that the Anglo-US bloc is not to be trusted, despite its smooth talk and apparently peaceful intentions...The occupation by U.K. and U.S. troops of Lebanon and Jordan...is not only interference in these nations’ internal affairs but also a challenge to the United Nations itself...We are sure that our Army will hit back hard at any aggressive attack which might be carried out against us.⁵⁵⁵

The view that the American intervention constituted a serious obstacle to improved U.S.-Iraqi relations was also expressed by official Iraqi quarters. On August 19 Foreign Minister Abu al-Jabbar Jumard had told an extraordinary session of the United Nations General Assembly that the American and British troops in Lebanon and Jordan constituted a threat to Iraq’s national security and to world peace. The minister concluded: “The pretence that the landing of troops was merely to protect the

Lebanese people in its revolution were the most obvious signs of the failure of the Eisenhower Doctrine.” Furthermore, the United States was accused of attempts to sow division in the ranks of the Arab states, Al-Zaman, January 11, 1959, p. 2. A third article published two days later in the same newspaper contended that the real motive behind America’s professions of friendship towards the Arabs was the elimination of “emancipated Arab nationalism,” Al-Zaman, January 13, 1959, p. 8. The unrealistic claim that the C.I.A. had one thousand agents proficient in Arabic should have alerted Qasim to the spurious nature of this “intelligence.” It is possible, however, that the “intelligence” claimed that the agents were locally recruited. Still, it would have been difficult to run undetected an intelligence gathering operation on such a scale.

⁵⁵⁴ R. B. Horgan, the Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, April 2, 1959, no. M-642, Confidential, 787.00/4-259 Subject: The Situation in Iraq, Participants: Parker T. Hart, Deputy Assistant Secretary; D.N. Chatterjee, Minister, Embassy of India; R. B. Horgan, India Desk Officer. Furthermore, the memorandum stated that “our aid technicians were encountering difficulties; companies with contracts were having difficulty getting paid.”

⁵⁵⁵ Al-Yaqza (nationalist), August 6, 1958, quoted in The Iraq Times, August 7, 1958.

independence of Lebanon and Jordan convinces no one.”⁵⁵⁶ Such open criticism of both the United States and Britain in an international organization would have been almost unthinkable under the Nuri regime.⁵⁵⁷

Despite the troubled relationship discussed above, the American recognition of the Republic of Iraq on August 2, 1958 served to reduce tension somewhat between the United States and Iraq but suspicions of American motives still persisted in Baghdad.⁵⁵⁸ According to an Iraqi diplomat in the United Nations the American recognition “had served to lessen the suspicion that the US landings in Lebanon were directed against Iraq.”⁵⁵⁹ Suspicions would, however, persist as long as American troops remained in Lebanon. The U.S. participation in the plot against Syria was an additional reason for Iraqi distrust, and it “would take time to overcome these revelations.”⁵⁶⁰ In the Iraqi diplomat’s view, the U.S. involvement in this conspiracy had been a major mistake. This is evidence of the negative impact on U.S.-Iraqi relations of previous U.S. policies in the Middle East.

⁵⁵⁶ The Iraq Times, August 20, 1958, p. 1. The view that the Western military operations in Lebanon and Jordan made it difficult to improve relations between “liberated Arab countries” and the West was echoed by Al-Zaman, October 9, 1958, quoted in The Iraq Times, October 10, 1958, p. 4. Furthermore, the press voiced the opinion that Asian and African countries maintaining close ties with the United States were only nominally independent, since they were “in every sense subordinate to the dictates of the U.S. policy,” Al-Ahali (organ of the National Democratic Party), December 20, 1958, quoted in The Iraq Times, December 21, 1958.

⁵⁵⁷ Nuri had expressed comparatively mild criticism of Britain during the Suez Crisis of 1956.

⁵⁵⁸ For a detailed analysis of the U.S. and British recognition of the Qasim regime, see Chapter 9.

⁵⁵⁹ David D. Newsome, Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, August 30, 1958, M-546, Confidential, 787.00/8-3058. Subject: Policies of Iraq Under New Regime. Participants: Mr. Adnan Pachachi, Member Iraqi Delegation, United Nations General Assembly, David D. Newsome, NE.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid. Also, see Patrick Seale, The Struggle for Syria, pp. 289-296. Due to Leftist successes in by-elections in May, and increasing Soviet influence, inter alia in the form of an economic and technical agreement of August 6, 1957, the U.S. government had decided that the Syrian government must be overthrown. This had resulted in the expulsion of three American diplomats on August 13 accused of having conspired with Syrian military officers against the government of Syria, Seale, The Struggle for Syria, pp. 290-291, 293-294.

Criticism of Iraqi foreign policy did not only come from Britain and the United States but from members of Qasim's cabinet as well. The Marxist Minister of Economy Ibrahim Kubba had attempted a Marxist critique of Qasim's foreign policy during his trial.⁵⁶¹ Commenting on the Qasim regime's foreign policy during the period under discussion, 1958-1959, Kubba had argued that the centrist forces in the government had formulated the foreign policy and that this policy had failed to adopt a decisive anti-imperialist stance, with the result that it had been swinging back and forth between this or that camp, attempting to accommodate one or the other. Not surprisingly, in the eyes of Kubba—a Marxist by conviction—Qasim's foreign policy had not been revolutionary.⁵⁶² Kubba's analysis of Qasim's policy towards foreign powers was correct from a Marxist perspective and his criticism of Qasim's policies only meant that they were not revolutionary in a Marxist sense. Qasim's intention had never been to pursue Marxist policies in the first place. Kubba fails in his analysis to compare the foreign policy of the new regime with that of Nuri. The basic argument of this chapter is that in this context Qasim's foreign policy was a radical, or even revolutionary, departure from the past. It appears that Kubba postulated that a revolutionary foreign policy could only be Marxist in nature. As has been contended in this chapter, it was Qasim's intention to establish friendly relations with all countries, including the imperialist powers, if they committed themselves to abandon the unequal relationship of the past. In a sense this inclusive

⁵⁶¹ Ibrahim Kubba, Hadha Huwa Tariq 14 Tammuz: Difa' Ibrahim Kubba Imama Mahkamat al-Thawra [This is the Way of July 14: Ibrahim Kubba's Defense before the Revolutionary Court], Bairut: Dar al-Tali'a lil-Taba'awa al-Nashr, 1969, p. 5. A reason for the sharp criticism was most likely the fact that he was facing a court controlled by Qasim's enemies. Kubba's trial lasted two and a half months, February-April, 1964. The new regime, which had overthrown Qasim in February 1963, had put Kubba on trial for his participation in the implementation of Qasim's policies, and it was in his own interest to insure that the judge would hand down a light sentence.

⁵⁶² Kubba, Hadha Huwa Tariq 14 Tammuz, p. 26.

approach was more revolutionary than a Marxist approach, which would have resembled the exclusive approach of Nuri, only inverted in the Marxist case.

The re-establishment of diplomatic relations with the socialist countries did not signify a desire on the part of the new Iraqi regime to emulate the Soviet system.⁵⁶³ It was partly the result of previous Western policies towards Iraq, Nuri's foreign policy, and a natural urge to look for new friends in the international community.⁵⁶⁴ Of equal importance was the strong desire to pursue an independent foreign policy for the first time since the creation of Iraq after World War I. The Qasim regime saw Nuri's severing of relations with the Soviet Union in January of 1955 as "[a] feature of the submission of the old governments to imperialism."⁵⁶⁵ Considering the fact that one of the principles of Iraq's new foreign policy was anti-imperialism, the re-establishment of relations with the socialist countries should simply be seen as the manifestation of a new independent foreign policy. The regime's claim that the severing of relations with the Soviet Union was the result of "submission to imperialism" was, however, mere propaganda. This was far from a condition imposed by Britain or the United States. Both powers had embassies in Moscow and the decision was Nuri's own.

⁵⁶³ Qassim, Press Interviews Granted by Major-General Abdul Karim Qassim, p. 24. In an interview with Peter Worthington on May 20, 1959 Qasim had stated that relations with the Soviet Union only went so far: "There can be no doubt that Russia is a friendly country. I shall, personally, build up my friendship with her on the basis of mutual benefits between the two peoples. Absolute sovereignty is for Iraq. Russia cannot interfere in Iraqi affairs." The Soviet Union had shown its friendly intentions with respect to the new Iraqi regime by recognizing it on July 16, 1958, Izvestiya, July 17 and 19, 1958, referred to in Aryeh Yodfat, Arab Politics in the Soviet Mirror (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1973), p. 146. The U.S.S.R. had also concluded a trade agreement with Iraq on October 13, 1958, an agreement on economic and technical cooperation on March 16, 1959, and an agreement on cultural cooperation on May 9, 1959, Yodfat, Arab Politics in the Soviet Mirror, p. 148. Furthermore, Moscow showed its preference for moderate policies in Iraq and support for the Qasim regime, when an extremist wing, which advocated more radical reforms, gained control over the Communist Party of Iraq, Yodfat, Arab Politics in the Soviet Mirror, p. 154.

⁵⁶⁴ See footnote 544.

⁵⁶⁵ 14th of July Celebrations Committee, 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 103.

Relations with Arab states changed radically in some respects and remained the same in other respects. The greatest change took place in relations with the United Arab Republic, which underwent a transformation from very tense under Nuri to very close in the beginning of the Qasim era. Conversely, relations with Jordan went the opposite direction, from very close—both states had been united in the Arab Union under the previous regime—to very tense under Qasim.⁵⁶⁶ A Qasim era government publication emphasized the fundamental character of the change in relations with the Arab world with the following claim: “The old policy of plotting against the Arab neighbors, especially Syria, was completely changed after the Revolution.”⁵⁶⁷ After accusations of Egyptian interference in Iraq’s internal affairs, however, relations with Egypt reverted to the pre-revolutionary state with mass media in both countries waging a fierce propaganda war. Relations with the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale (F.L.N., or Jabhat al-Tahrir al-Watani in Arabic) had been friendly under Nuri and the only change under Qasim was probably the greater amounts allocated by the regime to the liberation of Algeria, ID2 million in the first year after the revolution. Furthermore, the Qasim government had severed economic relations with France and imposed a total boycott against this country.⁵⁶⁸ In the case of France relations did not undergo a significant transformation, since Nuri had resorted to similar policies during the Suez Crisis.⁵⁶⁹ The above discussion of the changes in relations with the Arab world suggests that these

⁵⁶⁶ For a discussion of Jordanian reactions to the Iraqi Revolution and the reasons for these reactions, see Chapter 9.

⁵⁶⁷ 14th of July Celebrations Committee, 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 102.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 102-103. Al-Zubaidi states that the economic aid went to the support of the provisional Algerian government and that an Iraqi aircraft departed once or twice per week with weapons and military equipment for Algeria, al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz 1958, p. 515.

⁵⁶⁹ For a detailed discussion of Nuri’s foreign policy, see Chapter 5.

changes were more diverse and fluctuated more than Iraq's relations with nations in other regions.

Trade Relations

The trade relations of the republican regime underwent radical change as well. Following the re-establishing and establishing of diplomatic relations with European and Asian socialist states trade, cultural, scientific, and educational relations quickly developed between Iraq and the communist and non-aligned countries, many of which had not had trade relations with the old regime due to the ban on such ties.⁵⁷⁰

The minister of Economy, Ibrahim Kubba, identified the weaknesses of the old regime's trade policies. He drew attention to three major problems regarding Iraq's foreign trade prior to July 14. The first problem was the lack of direction with respect to imports. There were almost no restrictions on goods which could be imported, and import licenses were only needed for 62 articles. In Kubba's view, none of these licensed goods, such as tobacco, cigarettes, blankets, soap, windows, and iron doors, should have been allowed to be imported in the first place, since they were manufactured locally as well. The lack of restrictions with regard to imports had a number of negative effects: importers focused on luxury goods; the large importers acquired what can be termed monopolies and engaged in price speculation, in particular foreign companies; these imports constituted a lethal threat to the domestic industry; industrial capital was reduced and capital which could otherwise have been invested was directed to imports; and

⁵⁷⁰ 14th of July Celebrations Committee, 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 60. The countries which had previously been banned from such relations with Iraq were Yugoslavia, the USSR, The U.A.R., the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, the People's Republic of China, and India.

finally, due to the above practices Iraq incurred a considerable trade deficit. The second problem with the trade policies of the old regime was that they caused a constant decrease and imbalances in Iraqi exports. Iraq's exports to Britain, which amounted to ID2.5 million, and its imports from her, which amounted to ID32.25 million, clearly illustrate the dimension of the problem. The last major problem was the complete lack of trade with the socialist countries. Thus, the problems inherent in the trade relations of the monarchy explain the new policies of the republic.⁵⁷¹

According to an official source three new objectives of Iraq's trade relations were laid down by the Ministry of Economics in order to carry out a complete reorientation of the nation's trade relations with the outside world. The first objective aimed at boosting the local industry and protecting it from foreign competition. This was to be achieved through the banning of and imposition of restrictions on the import of certain goods which could be locally manufactured. As a result of this new policy the imports of machinery was emphasized. A second concern which needed to be addressed was the mounting trade deficit. This was to be achieved through increasing Iraqi exports, finding new markets, and reducing the import of luxury goods. Finally, the third objective consisted of encouraging trade with socialist and neutral countries.⁵⁷² In the view of the new government in Baghdad the previous regime had neglected Iraq's interests and subjected Iraqi trade relations to the requirements of the Western world.⁵⁷³

Another primary source adds the following measures taken to address the problems inherited from the monarchy. The new government decided that Iraq would enter only

⁵⁷¹ Kubba, Hadha Huwa Tariq 14 Tammuz, pp. 52-53.

⁵⁷² 14th of July Celebrations Committee, 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution Ibid., pp. 56 and 59. Also, see Muhammad Kazim 'Ali, Al-'Iraq fi 'Ahd 'Abd al-Karim Qasim, p. 295.

⁵⁷³ 14th of July Celebrations Committee, 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 58.

into equal trade agreements with other states. These agreements would state unequivocally the mutual obligations of the contracting parties, and the principles of relative and barter trade. Iraq would pursue import policies compatible with the new economic and financial policies in other fields. Finally, a public trade sector would be created, the purpose of which would be to direct the new trade policy.⁵⁷⁴ The last step taken to address what was perceived as the mistakes of the old regime in its trade policies testifies to the important role assigned to the state in rectifying these mistakes. The measures described above are a clear indication that the new system introduced by the Qasim regime constituted a fundamental change and radical departure from the old regime's foreign trade policy.

It did not take long before the new trade policy manifested itself. When the Soviet Ambassador Grigori Titovich Zaitsev arrived in Baghdad on August 5, 1958, he immediately offered to extend Soviet technical aid to Iraq.⁵⁷⁵ The arrival of Zaitsev later resulted in two Iraqi-Soviet agreements—a trade agreement signed in Baghdad on October 11, 1958, and an Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation signed on March 16, 1959.⁵⁷⁶ These agreements and subsequent visits by officials from socialist countries show that the latter seized upon the new opportunities following Iraq's reorientation of her trade policies. Furthermore, the Iraqi-Soviet trade agreement is also an indication that visits of these delegations were welcomed in Baghdad and that both parties perceived them as beneficial.

⁵⁷⁴ Kubba, Hadha Huwa Tariq 14 Tammuz, p. 54.

⁵⁷⁵ The Iraq Times, August 6, 1958, p. 3.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, October 3, p. 3, October 28, p. p.1, and October 13, p. 1. 'Ali, Al-'Iraq fi 'Ahd 'Abd al-Karim Qasim, p. 289. For a detailed discussion of the Iraqi-Soviet agreements, see Kubba, Hadha Huwa Tariq 14 Tammuz, and for an analysis of the reactions of the political parties to the agreements, see 'Ali, Al-'Iraq fi 'Ahd 'Abd al-Karim Qasim.

There were several reasons for the great appeal trade with socialist countries exerted on the new Iraqi regime. When an Iraqi economic delegation had visited Damascus and Cairo in early September 1958 it had had the opportunity to acquaint itself with the role of the socialist states in the expansion of the Egyptian economy. U.A.R. experts, ministers, and Nasser himself had emphasized the important role the socialist countries played in expanding the U.A.R. economy.⁵⁷⁷ Furthermore, trade with the Soviet bloc was for the mutual benefit of the parties, and it enabled Iraq to free herself from subjugation to the “imperialist economic system” and the capitalist market. Also, trade relations with the socialist and non-aligned states opened up new markets for Iraqi exports. Last but not least, trade agreements with the aforementioned countries held out the promise of barter trade.⁵⁷⁸ It is thus not difficult to see why the new leaders in Baghdad preferred to do trade with socialist and non-aligned countries.⁵⁷⁹

The part of this chapter analyzing Iraq’s trade relations has established that the foreign trade policy introduced by the Qasim regime after the July 14 revolution differed radically from the one in place under the monarchy. The republican regime introduced a certain degree of state control of imports and exports, emphasized barter trade and agreements with no strings attached. The latter two reasons in particular lead to a radical reorientation of Iraqi foreign trade towards socialist and non-aligned states.

⁵⁷⁷ Kubba, Hadha Huwa Tariq 14 Tammuz, p. 78.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 73. Agreements with the Soviet Union allowed Iraq to barter sugar for cotton, with Czechoslovakia dates were bartered for automobiles, and with India dates were bartered for tea.

⁵⁷⁹ Kubba claims that the reason why Iraq rejected to sign a trade agreement with the United States was that it came with strings attached. The Americans had demanded that the Iraqi side guarantee that no American interests be nationalized, a reasonable request in exchange for investments. The Iraqis, however, had interpreted this request as an infringement on their sovereign rights, Kubba, Hadha Huwa Tariq 14 Tammuz, p. 70.

Military Relations

During the Nuri regime Iraq had maintained close military ties with Britain and to a lesser degree with the United States. Through the Anglo-Iraqi Agreement of 1955 and the Mutual Security Agreements with the United States of 1954 and 1955, and the membership in the Baghdad Pact Iraq had received military aid from both Western powers. Following the revolution the close military relations with the West became problematic owing to the principle of neutralism to which the republican government had subscribed.

Despite Iraq's continued nominal membership in the Baghdad Pact this "imperialist" defense organization and the two "imperialist" states Britain and the United States were subjected to sharp criticism in the Iraqi press.⁵⁸⁰ A case in point is the Iraqi daily Al-Zaman. The two main objectives of the Pact, according to the newspaper, of which the first was indirect and the second direct, were allegedly (1) encirclement of the Soviet Union and the socialist states, and preparation for a world war; and (2) to consolidate the shaky position of the imperialist powers in the Middle East, to combat national liberation movements in the region and to exploit its natural resources in the interest of imperialism. Another alleged objective was subversive activities in Syria. Furthermore, following the Iraqi Revolution, Iraq had, according to Al-Zaman, become a potential target for military operations and sabotage actions. The first American and British reactions to the Iraqi revolution, the "occupation" of Lebanon and Jordan, had been interpreted by the new Iraqi regime as part of a plan, the objective of which was a military attack against Iraq.

⁵⁸⁰ The Qasim regime did not announce its official withdrawal from the organization until March 24, 1959, but ceased all cooperation with the Pact and participation in its activities following the revolution. The reasons for the delayed decision to withdraw from the Pact have been analyzed in Chapter 8 and will not be repeated here. The decision was based on national security considerations.

Imperialism was also blamed for attempting to sow division in Iraq and in Arab ranks, especially between the United Arab Republic and Iraq. One newspaper even recommended that Iraq declare officially its withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact and the abrogation of all agreements and secret protocols entered into by the previous regime.⁵⁸¹

The official view was similar, albeit somewhat more moderate in tone. Iraq's membership in the Baghdad Pact was described as follows:

Iraq's relations with Western states, especially Britain and the United States of America, were unequal under the old regime. Iraq, then, had no independent internal or external policy, but was rotating in the imperialist orbit, and reconditioning its policy according to its strategic needs and interests. This subordinated relation was clearly illustrated in the agreements signed during the old regime....⁵⁸²

The quote reflects the widespread perception in the ranks of the opposition and the Free Officers that Iraq had been in a position of almost complete subjugation to Western interests under the monarchy. This perception eventually resulted in the official withdrawal of Iraq from the Baghdad Pact on March 24, 1959, with the simultaneous abrogation of the Anglo-Iraqi Agreement of 1955 and the ensuing complete evacuation of British military personnel from the air bases of al-Habbaniyya and al-Shu'aiba. With the decision to withdraw from the Pact Iraq's unofficial and official policies had become identical.⁵⁸³

⁵⁸¹ Al-Zaman, March 1, 1959, p. 3. It is possible that the government had somehow given the press advance notice, alluding to the impending withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact.

⁵⁸² 14 July Celebrations Committee, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 103.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104. According to the same government publication source an official letter from the Iraqi government to the embassies of Iraq's former allies in the Pact informs the latter that "...the presence of Iraq as a partner in the Baghdad Pact is incompatible with the policy of positive neutrality which was declared and followed ever since the 14th of July, 1958. The Pact also runs counter to the wishes of the people....[T]he Iraqi Government is of the opinion that its withdrawal from the membership of the Pact is a basic means for strengthening and developing amity and friendship between Iraq and the other states of the world," *ibid.*, pp. 103-104.

There were several reasons for not announcing the decision to withdraw from the Baghdad Pact until March of 1959. First, for national security reasons it appeared crucial not to announce a withdrawal immediately following July 14. The American and British military operations in Lebanon and Jordan clearly constituted a potential threat to the new Iraqi regime. Any additional challenge to the West's position in the Middle East might provoke a military response. Second, the new regime's efforts to gain diplomatic recognition, including from Britain and the United States, and the Asian members of the Baghdad Pact, dictated that "non-offensive" policies be pursued by the Qasim regime. Third, the consideration that Iraq might be able to purchase arms from the West most likely was a reason for remaining a member of the Pact. Fourth, the government in Baghdad feared that a precipitous decision to sever all ties to the Pact might provoke Britain to take measures which would have adverse effect on Iraq's economy, in particular if the British-owned Iraq Petroleum Company suspended the export of oil. Fifth, owing to divisions among the political parties and the Free Officers, Qasim needed time to create stability in the country, and therefore refrained from taking action which would distract him from this primary objective.⁵⁸⁴ Sixth, Iraq had huge sterling reserves in British banks, and British displeasure with Iraqi policies could have led to the freezing of these reserves. There were thus compelling reasons for not announcing an immediate withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact.

Simultaneously with keeping all options open to the West, the Iraqi government explored the possibility of military relations with the Soviet Union. As early as November 18 Israeli foreign ministry officials had reported that there were indications

⁵⁸⁴ Al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz 1958, p. 509.

that either the Soviet Union or Czechoslovakia had offered Iraq an arms deal, but that there was no conclusive evidence as yet. In the opinion of the Israeli officials, an Iraqi decision to withdraw from the Baghdad Pact would be an indication of the existence of such an arms deal.⁵⁸⁵ In early December a State Department memorandum appeared to provide hard evidence that some kind of arms deal had been concluded between the Soviet Union and Iraq. According to the Department's source a Soviet freighter had unloaded "a cargo of military equipment."⁵⁸⁶ This intelligence had in turn been corroborated by British Ambassador Humphrey Trevelyan at the end of January in a report which stated that "[a] military agreement with the USSR [had begun] to produce a flow of Soviet arms into Iraq."⁵⁸⁷ The intelligence referred to above suggests that there might have been some merit to the Israeli speculations that an official Iraqi withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact would indicate a successfully concluded agreement on arms transfers from the "Soviet Bloc" to Iraq. The intelligence discussed in this paragraph pertains to a period of a few months preceding the Iraqi withdrawal from the Pact at the end of March 1959.⁵⁸⁸

Telegrams from the U.S. Air Attaché in Baghdad confirm frequent arrivals in Basra of East European ships carrying military supplies. The Air Attaché stated as early as

⁵⁸⁵ William Bruce Lockling, First Secretary Embassy, Tel Aviv to the Department of State, November 19, 1958, Despatch no. 320, Confidential, 787.00/11-1958 Subject: Israeli Foreign Ministry Views on Iraqi Developments.

⁵⁸⁶ Richard B. Parker, NE, Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, December 3, 1958, 787.00/12-358, Subject: Iraq. Participants: Mr. F. W. Phillips, American Easter Corporation, NE – Mr. Richard B. Parker.

⁵⁸⁷ Humphrey Trevelyan Baghdad to the Foreign Office, January 29, 1959, no. 9, Confidential, FO371/140896

⁵⁸⁸ An Iraqi Government publication later confirmed the above reports stating that the Ministry of Defense had contacted "firms and official quarters" in many countries, especially socialist states to request offers regarding arms sales. The same publication also reported that training missions were being sent to the socialist countries to study military science and techniques, 14 July Celebrations Committee, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 15.

November 21, three days after the Israeli report referred to above, that rumors were circulating in Baghdad about a Soviet delegation holding talks regarding an agreement for the supply of military equipment.⁵⁸⁹ In December the Air Attaché reported that the Iraqi Air Force Commander Jalal al-Awqati had visited Czechoslovakia to negotiate procurement of Soviet MiG aircraft for the Iraqi Air Force, with probable arrangements for Iraqi pilots to be trained in Czechoslovakia.⁵⁹⁰ The same month the U.S. military official reported that the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia were not the only sources of Iraqi arms purchases, stating that a Yugoslav shipment of arms had arrived in Iraq.⁵⁹¹ Furthermore, between December 21, 1958 and May 30, 1959 the Attaché reported the arrival of five Soviet arms shipments at Basra.⁵⁹² A sixth ship had arrived with a possible cargo of Soviet MiG 15 aircraft.⁵⁹³ These U.S. Air Attaché reports suggest that Iraq had signed agreements with at least the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, and possibly other East European countries, for the supply of military equipment.

Despite the official Iraqi abrogation of its membership in the Baghdad Pact on March 24, 1959, and the reports of an Iraqi-Soviet arms deal, the Department of State was considering the possible effects of U.S. arms transfers to Iraq. In a telegram to the Embassy in Baghdad Acting Secretary of State Christian A. Herter had solicited the Embassy's view on the "purely exploratory" question of whether it would be "helpful to approach Qasim again regarding the Government of Iraq's attitude to [the] US military

⁵⁸⁹ US Air Attaché, Baghdad to the Department of the Air Force, November 21, 1958, Secret, 787.00(W)/11-2158.

⁵⁹⁰ US Air Attaché, Baghdad to the Department of the Air Force, December 7, 1958, Confidential, 787.00(W)/12-758. The Air Attaché mistakenly calls the Air Force Commander Yalal.

⁵⁹¹ US Air Attaché, Baghdad to the Department of the Air Force, December 14, 1958, Secret, 787.00(W)/12-1458.

⁵⁹² US Air Attaché, Baghdad to the Department of the Air Force, December 21, 1958, Secret, 787.00(W)/12-2158, and March 28, 1958, Confidential, 787.00(W)/3-2859.

⁵⁹³ US Air Attaché, Baghdad to the Department of the Air Force, May 30, 1959, Confidential, 787.00(W)/5-3059.

aid agreement, with a view to [the] possible release of [the] remainder of [the] items in [the] pipeline. Herter's own answer to his question had been that he doubted that "such [a] release would have noticeably constructive effect in Iraq and it would certainly have negative results on [the] current valuable UAR anti-Communist campaign."⁵⁹⁴ Herter had also stated that it would have been difficult to justify such an offer in view of Iraq's recent withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact.⁵⁹⁵ Herter's question testifies to the fact that U.S. diplomats deemed it important to dispel Qasim's suspicions with respect to U.S. intentions in the Middle East, and that they even considered unorthodox methods in order to prevent that the Iraqi leader became dependent on the Soviet Union.⁵⁹⁶

This part of the chapter has provided evidence supporting the argument that the reorientation of Iraqi foreign relations following the July 14 revolution holds true for military relations with foreign powers as well. Iraq's movement away from close military relations with Britain and the United States, and membership in a West-sponsored and -led defense organization did not end in a military alliance with the Soviet Union. The new Iraqi regime took the country in a direction, however, which involved arms purchases from and training of Iraqi military personnel in the U.S.S.R. Needless to say, Nuri would never have pursued such a policy, since Nasser and not the British was his main adversary in the Middle East, which is why one can conclude that the Qasim regime's military relations with foreign powers constituted a radical departure from those of the previous regime. These relations differed to such a degree from the policies

⁵⁹⁴ Herter, Acting Secretary of State to Embassy Baghdad, March 26, 1959, Secret, 787.00/3-2659.

⁵⁹⁵ This is indubitably an accurate assessment, since the remaining Asian members of the Pact would have questioned the value of membership in the Pact if arms could be acquired with such ease even without membership.

⁵⁹⁶ See Chapter 9 for a detailed discussion of British and U.S. policies towards the new regime in Baghdad. The U.S. position on the Qasim regime had moved from an initial rejection of even considering recognition to a position where arms transfers could be considered if compelling arguments could be found in support of such action.

pursued by the Nuri regime that they constituted a revolutionary development in Iraq's relations with the outside world during the first year in power of the new government.

ARAB UNITY AND DISCORD IN 1958

The idea of Arab unity, which had enjoyed widespread support among Iraqi intellectuals and opposition politicians in the Nuri era, appeared to be much closer to realization when the Iraqi Revolution erupted on July 14, 1958. With the most important Arab countries, the United Arab Republic and Iraq, under nationalist regimes the proponents of Arab unity seemed poised to realize their dream. Efforts in the Arab world to attain Arab unity prior to the Iraqi Revolution had not been successful. The reason is that they resulted in disunity, as manifested in the proclamation of the Syrian-Egyptian United Arab Republic followed by the formation of the Jordanian-Iraqi Arab Union. With respect to Arab unity, the Iraqi Revolution turned out to be an anti-climax. Previous chapters have argued that the events of July 14 and the subsequent policies of the Qasim regime constituted a social, economic, political, and psychological revolution. The only important area where the revolution did not lead to radical change, however, was Arab unity. U.A.R.-Iraqi relations had been very tense before the Revolution, and after a short initial rapprochement following the Iraqi Revolution, relations between the two states deteriorated to a point where the U.A.R.-government sponsored coup attempts against the Qasim regime. In this sense "business as usual" is an accurate expression to describe U.A.R.-Iraqi relations. The irony of the Iraqi Revolution was thus that it seemingly offered the Arabs a better opportunity than at any point of time since the Great Arab Revolt in 1916 to attain Arab unity, whereas in reality it turned out to be an event which effectively prevented Arab unity.

Transjordan-Jordan's and Iraq's search for unity was not realized until February of 1958. The efforts to achieve the coveted unity, however, actually produced disunity, in particular after the Iraqi Revolution. The Iraqi-Jordanian Arab Union was formed two weeks after the Egyptian-Syrian United Arab Republic. To what degree was the Arab Union a reaction to the merger of Egypt and Syria in the United Arab Republic in February of 1958? Furthermore, this chapter will address the struggle between the two major competing interpretations of Arab unity—that of Qasim and that of the pan-Arabists—which led to instability in Iraq, and the reason why the relationship between Egypt and Iraq became even more acrimonious than that between the Egyptian President Gamal 'Abdul Nasser and Nuri al-Sa'id.⁵⁹⁷ Was this an inevitable outcome of the struggle? The chapter will primarily focus on the period from February to December 1958, but also discuss Iraqi-Jordanian efforts to achieve unity prior to this period and the British role in these endeavors.

Prior to the Iraqi Revolution Transjordan-Jordan and Iraq had both made several successive efforts to establish closer bilateral ties, but Britain had consistently opposed too close a relationship between Baghdad and Amman. During 1950 and 1951 Jordan and Iraq exchanged several proposals as to forming a union between the two states, similar to what was eventually agreed upon in February 1958.⁵⁹⁸ These efforts to form a union were reinforced following the assassination of King Abdullah on July 20, 1951 but eventually thwarted due to British pressure following intervention in the Jordanian elections by the

⁵⁹⁷ The tense relations between Nasser and Nuri al-Sa'id had produced a bitter propaganda war between the two rivals for leadership of the Arab world. This war was effectively waged over the air waves by the Egyptian radio station Sawt al-'Arab, al-A'zami, Nuri al-Sa'id wa al-Sira' ma'a 'Abd al-Nasir, p. 72.

⁵⁹⁸ Prior to these proposals Transjordan and Iraq had signed an Agreement for Alliance and Brotherhood on April 15, 1947, 'Abd al-Fattah, Siyasat al-'Iraq al-Kharijiyya, p. 465. A problem during the discussions was the position of head of the proposed union. The objective of the Iraqi side was to insure that King Faisal II would become head of the union, thus guaranteeing Iraqi leadership.

British commander of the Arab Legion, Brigadier Sir John Bagot Glubb.⁵⁹⁹ This is evidence that the British as late as 1951 successfully intervened to prevent too close a political relationship to develop between Iraq and Jordan. It is quite possible that the rationale for such an approach was that pressure could more easily be exercised on smaller political units than on larger ones.

Conversely, Britain appeared to take a different position on Iraqi-Syrian union in 1955. A high official in the Foreign Office believed the “incorporation of Syria into Iraq” might be a “tempting” idea, considering the political situation in Syria.⁶⁰⁰ The pre-condition for such action, however, was that if an imminent serious risk of Soviet domination of Syria were to occur, it would be appropriate to “encourage the liquidation of the country.”⁶⁰¹ The official only anticipated two possible problems with such action—Israeli opposition and Iraqi failure to maintain control of Syria. It is clear from the above that the Foreign Office official’s stance on Syria did not constitute a fundamental shift in Britain’s position on Arab unity. This only indicated a possible reaction if a situation developed in Syria which would pose a serious threat to British interests in the Middle East.⁶⁰²

⁵⁹⁹ According to an Arab source, the rigging of the elections was undertaken by Glubb in collaboration with Prime Minister Tawfiq Abu al-Huda who had initially endorsed the union plans, in order to prevent nationalists to be elected to the Jordanian Parliament. Furthermore, Israel had allegedly exerted pressure on the British to prevent an Iraqi-Jordanian union, Wizarat al-Difa‘, Muhakamat al-Mahkama, vol. iv, (n.d.), p. 1622, referred to in ‘Abd al-Fattah, Siyasat al-‘Iraq al-Kharijiyya, pp. 466-471; Al-Yaqza, February 6, 1950, referred to in Mutawalli al-‘Arabi, Nuri Basha al-Sa‘id, p. 243. For British pressure in 1946, see Watha’iq al-Kharijiyya al-Misriyya (Arshif Sirri Jadid) mafhaza 3, Baghdad, Millaf 1/7/217 Madhlura ila al-Sayyid al-Safir Wakil Wizarat al-Kharijiyya ‘an Mashru‘ Ittihad baina al-‘Iraq wa al-‘Urdunn, 10/6 104 referred to in Mutawalli al-‘Arabi, Nuri Basha al-Sa‘id, p. 240.

⁶⁰⁰ Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, Permanent Under Secretary in the Foreign Office.

⁶⁰¹ Kirkpatrick, Memorandum, 31 October 1955, FO371/115469, quoted in Saunders, pp. 45-46.

⁶⁰² Saunders, however, argues that Britain had long accepted an Iraqi-Syrian union, Makins to the Foreign, Office 28 October 1955, FO371/115954, quoted in Saunders, p. 46.

The United Arab Republic

Syria's official efforts to promote Arab unity at least go back to 1951. Early in 1951 the Syrian Prime Minister Nazim al-Qudsi had presented a proposal to the Council of the Arab League in which he called for a plan to realize Arab unity. The so-called al-Qudsi Plan mentioned three types of unity relations: a confederation, a federation, and a union, stating that Syria preferred a "full union." The fact that the plan originated in Syria did not come as a surprise. At the time Syria was the only Arab state with a constitution which stipulated that the country's president and members of parliament work for Arab unity. Reactions to the al-Qudsi Plan were mixed. A majority of the newspapers in Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine welcomed the Plan, whereas Egyptian and Lebanese newspapers were far from positive.⁶⁰³ Al-Qudsi's initiative and the Syrian Constitution reveal that Syria was the driving force behind Arab unity.

Several years of political instability and infighting in the officer corps eventually led to, in the summer and fall of 1957, Syrian politicians and officers alike turning to the Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser for rescue. The Ba'athists and many army officers in particular saw union with Egypt as the best means to reintroduce stability into their nation's political life. Furthermore, the Ba'th Party believed that union with Egypt could be exploited to defeat political rivals and some high-ranking military officers were hoping that Nasser would empower them to form a Council of the Revolution. On January 12, 1958, the Chief of Staff of the Army, General 'Afif al-Bizri, accompanied by 13 high-ranking officers traveled to Cairo to meet with Nasser and ask the Egyptian

⁶⁰³ Al-Husri, *Al-'Uruba Awwalan*, pp. 141-144. The Syrian Constitution also stated that Syrians worked for the unification of all Arabs in one state, Abu Khaldun Sati' al-Husri: *Ara' wa Ahadith fi al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya* [Speeches and Views on Arab Nationalism] (Bairut: Dar al-'Ilm lil Malayin, 1956, second edition (first printed in 1951), p. 9.

leader to save Syria. The mission had not been sanctioned by the Syrian government, which in turn dispatched Foreign Minister Salah al-Din Bitar to Cairo. The Syrian officers had discussed union with Nasser and Bitar returned to Damascus to report on Nasser's terms: the withdrawal of the Syrian army from politics and the dissolution of political parties. Furthermore, Nasser had demanded a free hand in Syria. Following several unsuccessful attempts to negotiate these terms the Syrian government had yielded and the United Arab Republic had been proclaimed on February 1, 1958.⁶⁰⁴ The above account of Egyptian-Syrian developments reveals that Nasser was not interested in sharing power with any Syrian political force.⁶⁰⁵ It also shows that the Syrian Ba'th Party was the driving force behind the formation of the United Arab Republic.⁶⁰⁶

The Arab Union

Jordanian and Iraqi leaders reacted with dismay to the proclamation of the United Arab Republic and in turn formed the Arab Union.⁶⁰⁷ There are a number of reasons for the formation of the Union on February 14, 1958, two weeks after the proclamation of the

⁶⁰⁴ Seale, *The Struggle For Syria*, pp. 307-322; Kerr, *The Arab Cold War*, pp. 11-12; Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser*, pp. 142-143.

⁶⁰⁵ From Nasser's perspective his demands must have appeared quite reasonable: If he was asked to assume control of an unstable state, it would have to be on his terms only, and eliminating the roots of the instability—the Syrian army's role in politics and the political parties—were necessary steps to increase Egypt's regional role.

⁶⁰⁶ Nasser had initially been opposed to an Egyptian-Syrian union, a fact which explains his demands regarding the Syrian army and political parties. Nasser's objective prior to the union with Syria had been to control Syria's foreign policy, which could be done without an Egyptian-Syrian merger. Despite his reluctance to form the United Arab Republic, he had agreed to do so in order to "preserve his prestige and position in the country," Briefing by General Cabell, NSC 353rd meeting, January 30, 1958, Eisenhower Papers, referred to in Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser*, p. 144. Syrian opposition to the union was voiced in particular by the communists, who realized it would mean the end of party activities in Syria.

⁶⁰⁷ According to a former minister of the monarchic era Crown Prince 'Abd al-Ilah was "in a state of great fear and panic" emphasizing that "the UAR "constituted a dangerous challenge to Iraq and a threat to its existence," 'Abd al-Karim al-'Uzri, *Tarikh fi Dhikrayat al-'Iraq 1930-1958*, [History in Reminiscences of Iraq] (Bairut: Markaz al-Abjadiyya li al-Saff al-Taswiri, 1982), p. 550.

United Arab Republic. Many works argue that the Arab Union was formed as the direct result of the proclamation of the United Arab Republic.⁶⁰⁸ There are, however, indications that other forces as well contributed to the seemingly abrupt decision to form a counter-union to the Arab Republic. The evidence provided above of a successful British attempt to prevent the formation of an Iraqi-Jordanian political union as late as in 1951 reveals that British opposition was a force to be reckoned with for any union project.

King Hussein played a leading role in the efforts to form the Arab Union. He had originally wished to include Saudi Arabia in the Union but had received a discouraging reply from King ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Ibn Sa‘ud when the Jordanian Foreign Minister Samir al-Rifa‘i had been dispatched to Riyadh in November of 1957 to inform the King of Hussein’s proposal for an alliance or a union. One reason for Ibn Sa‘ud’s lack of interest was Iraq’s commitment to the Baghdad Pact, which, in his view, would have needed to be abrogated.⁶⁰⁹ Conversely, had Ibn Sa‘ud reacted positively to Hussein’s overture, the

⁶⁰⁸ A secret session of the Baghdad Pact Council held in Ankara on 28-29 January to discuss the forthcoming Egyptian-Syrian union appears to substantiate this argument. At the meeting the following measures had been agreed upon: “(1) A restrained cautious public reaction to the Egyptian-Syrian union by the members of the Baghdad Pact. (2) ‘Active operation’ by Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon ‘in promoting opposition to union inside Syria.’ (3) Support by all the members of the Pact as well as the United States for any ‘Arab initiative in the direction of forming an alternative expression of Arab unity,’” J. Bowker, Embassy Ankara to the Foreign Office, 30 January 1958, FO371/134386, quoted in Mufti, *Sovereign Creations*, pp. 100-101).

⁶⁰⁹ Alan de Lacy Rush, *Records of the Hashemite Dynasties: A Twentieth Century Documentary History, Jordan*, vol. ix (Archive Editions, 1995), p. 6, Embassy Amman to the Foreign Office, No. 13, February 19, 1958, FO371/132854, referred to in Ibrahim Fa‘ur al-Shar‘a, *Al-Ittihad al-‘Arabi 1958* [The Arab Union 1958] (Amman: al-Lajna al-‘Ulya li Kitabat Tarikh al-‘Urdunn, 2004), p. 108. Malik Mufti states that Hussein sent al-Rifa‘i to Riyadh on February 1, 1958, Malik Mufti, *Sovereign Creations* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 103. The two different dates are confusing. Why would al-Rifa‘i return to Riyadh a second time if Ibn Sa‘ud had already stated his view unequivocally on an Iraqi-Saudi-Jordanian union? On the other hand, it is not plausible that British diplomats had made such a glaring error in their correspondence. A third source argues that the United States had exercised pressure on Ibn Sa‘ud not to accede to a union with Iraq and Jordan and not to extend financial aid to such a union, since this would have affected American interests, that is, Saudi oil, *Al-Wandawi, Britaniya wa Siyasa Fasl al-Kuwait ‘an al-‘Iraq* [Britain and the Policy of Separating Kuwait from Iraq], p. 43, referred to in al-Shar‘a, *Al-Ittihad al-‘Arabi*, p. 291.

latter had planned to visit Riyadh in December of 1957. The real significance of al-Rifa'i's visit to Riyadh is that it took place before the proclamation of the United Arab Republic on February 1, 1958. This fact supports the argument that the idea of forming the Arab Union had been on King Hussein's mind more than two months before the Syrian-Egyptian merger, which in turn weakens the contention that the Arab Union was the result of a decision made in great haste following the proclamation of the United Arab Republic on February 1, 1958.⁶¹⁰

⁶¹⁰ Benjamin Shwadran contends in an article in Middle Eastern Affairs that King Hussein had begun in November of 1957, when Syria and Egypt had signed a Trade and Financial Agreement, to perceive the Syrian- Egyptian rapprochement as a threat to Jordan, Benjamin Shwadran, "Union of Jordan with Iraq and Recoil," Middle Eastern Affairs, vol. ix, no. 12 (December 1958), p. 377, referred to in al-Shar'a, Al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, p. 108. An American Embassy report dated January 27, 1958, that is four days before the proclamation of the United Arab Republic, states that al-Rifa'i had had several conferences with King Hussein, and that both were concerned about the propaganda victory Nasser would win in the Arab world with a Syrian-Egyptian federation. Hussein had therefore instructed al-Rifa'i to prepare a plan to counter such a possibility. In order to frustrate Nasser's ambitions Hussein proposed that the kings of Iraq, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia meet before February 15. The intention was most likely to announce an Iraqi-Jordanian-Saudi federation prior to the proclamation of a Syrian- Egyptian federation, which according to Jordanian intelligence would be announced not later than March 1, 1958. Hussein's plan revealed that the element of depriving Nasser of a propaganda opportunity was important for the timing of an Iraqi-Jordanian-Saudi federation, suggesting that the threat a Syrian-Egyptian federation would pose to Jordan was one among several reasons, albeit the most important, for Hussein's federation initiative. In a conversation with an American diplomat al-Rifa'i had stated that he would explain the plan as based on "[the] revival of treaties of friendship and brotherhood between Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia...Inasmuch as treaties have been in force more than ten years and already renewed for additional periods [of] five-ten years [the] plan cannot be called [a] response to or in competition with the Egyptian-Syrian proposal but rather as the next logical step toward greater unity among Arab states sharing common borders," Chargé d'Affaires Thomas K. Wright, Amman to the Department of State, January 27, 1958, Secret, 786.00/1-2758, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960, vol. xi, Lebanon and Jordan (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1992), p. 268. The report further stated that a meeting was anticipated between the three kings within ten days of receipt of letters outlining al-Rifa'i's plan and that Hussein had requested that the United States provide assistance in convincing King Faisal and King Sa'ud of the urgency of a an Iraqi-Jordanian-Saudi federation. It is clear from this that Hussein doubted that he could present a convincing case to the two monarchs without U.S. support, which in turn suggests that Iraqi and Saudi leaders might not have been enthusiastic about a federation with Jordan. Finally, the American Embassy report stated that plans for a meeting between the rulers of Jordan, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia might leak out and result in a proclamation of an Egyptian-Syrian federation earlier than expected. It appears, however, that the Iraqi Parliament took steps towards promoting Arab unity before the Jordanian and Syrian initiatives discussed above. As early as December 15, 1956, Al-Zaman reported that 15 deputies of the Iraqi chamber of deputies had prepared a proposal to the effect that Jordan join Iraq in a union. A significant number of deputies were expected to support the proposal, which had been prepared in view of the dangers the Arab umma was facing, Al-Zaman, December 15, 1956, p. 6. It is obvious that the Suez Crisis had prompted the deputies to take this initiative. It is unclear, however, what Nuri's position was on the issue. He was the prime minister at the time and the proposal would not have seen the light of day without his approval. The question is whether

The outcome of al-Rifa'i's visit to Riyadh most likely increased the chances for a rapid proclamation of a Jordanian-Iraqi union. Three kings all insisting on becoming the head of the Union might have constituted an insurmountable obstacle to the negotiators. There would have been little room for maneuvering in such a situation, since King Ibn Sa'ud would most likely not have accepted Hashimite primacy in the Union. One possible solution to this dilemma would have been a royal council consisting of the three kings, but this would likely have entailed a looser political entity than what King Hussein and Nuri al-Sa'id on the Iraqi side had in mind. In view of the Syrian-Egyptian negotiations for a united republic, however, the pressure in Jordanian and Iraqi ruling circles would have been strong to match the Syrian-Egyptian united republic. The Jordanian-Iraqi political entity must appear to the Arab public as a competitive alternative to the United Arab Republic. This is why a loose federation would not have been a feasible option to the rulers in Amman and Baghdad.⁶¹¹

The proclamation of the United Arab Republic on February 1, 1958, triggered fervent activity in Amman and Baghdad to rapidly form a union.⁶¹² When King Faisal II arrived

the initiative was meant to deflect the public's attention from the fact that Iraq's ally Britain had attacked Egypt, by enhancing the regime's Arab nationalist credentials.

⁶¹¹ On the other hand, had a large number of Arab states expressed interest in joining a looser political entity, this might have persuaded the Jordanians and Iraqis to reconsider their plans for an arrangement based on closer ties, since it would have resulted in a great propaganda victory over the United Arab Republic, which only had two members. The problem with this argument is that such a federation would have had to include states with different systems of government, such as Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan, Lebanon, and Libya, of which only Morocco and Libya were monarchies. Furthermore, the majority of Arab territories with a monarchic system of government were still controlled by Britain. Also, none of the aforementioned countries were contiguous to Iraq or Jordan, a fact which would have presented logistical and strategic problems in a military conflict, and would of necessity have imposed limits on how effective a federation would have been. The circumstance that a competing revolutionary political entity—the United Arab Republic—would have separated the eastern part from the western and southern parts of the federation would certainly also have complicated relations within such a federation.

⁶¹² Unlike the proclamation of the United Arab Republic, which was received with euphoria in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East, the formation of the Arab Union evoked only indifference among Iraqis, Ismael Ahmad Yaghi, *Al-'Alaqa al-'Iraqiyya al-Urdunniyya, 1941-1958* [Iraqi-Jordanian Relations, 1941-1958] (al-Qahira: Dar al-Sahwa li al-Nashr, 1988), p. 55, referred to in Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism*, p. 206.

at Amman on February 11, at the invitation of King Hussein, in the company of the Iraqi Minister of Finance and the Minister of Justice, the pressure was great on the Jordanian and Iraqi delegations to prepare the ground for an expeditious decision with respect to the Union.⁶¹³ The fact that the Arab Union was proclaimed on the following day is a clear indication that the forming of the United Arab Republic on February 1, 1958 was one, but not the only, reason for the Arab Union project. One would assume that much time-consuming preparatory work by legal and other experts would have been necessary before the Union could be announced and that the process of preparing a Jordanian-Iraqi union had begun much earlier owing to other developments than the formation of the United Arab Republic.

One problem the Jordanian and Iraqi delegations struggled to solve during the negotiations for the Arab Union was the question of political hierarchy. The fact that both sides wished their respective king to become the head of the Arab Union appeared to set the stage for difficult negotiations. The solution which satisfied both sides stipulated that King Faisal of Iraq become the head of the Union and that King Abdullah of Jordan be the head in Faisal's absence.⁶¹⁴ The rapid proclamation of the Arab Union on February 14, shows that the desire for compromise was strong.

There were also military issues which the delegations had to address. One of the main problems was Iraq's membership in the Baghdad Pact. During the bilateral negotiations

⁶¹³ Al-'Arabi, Nuri Basha al-Sa'id, p. 258; Fikrat Namiq 'Abd al-Fattah, Siyasat al-'Iraq al-Kharijiyya Fi al-Mintaqa al-'Arabiyya 1953-1958 (Baghdad: Dar al-Rashid lil-Nashr, Manshurat Wizarat al-Thaqafa wa al-I'lam, al-Jumhuriyya al-'Iraqiyya, Salsala Dirasat (248), 1981), p. 472. Crown Prince 'Abd al-Ilah arrived on February 13. Al-Fattah argues that the reason for 'Abd al-Ilah's late arrival was his lack of enthusiasm for the whole Union project with Jordan.

⁶¹⁴ Ahmad al-Tarawana, Mudhakkirat Ahmad al-Tarawana: Rihlati ma' al-Urdunn (Amman: Matabi' al-Dustur al-Tijariyya, 1997), p. 77; Bahjat al-Talhuni, "Mudhakkirat Bahjat al-Talhuni, al-Majallat (London), no. 195 (November 5-11, 1983), p. 31, referred to in al-Shar'a, Al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, p. 130; al-'Arabi, Nuri Basha al-Sa'id, p. 259.

Iraq's commitment to the Pact had constituted a problem, since Jordan was not a party to the Pact. A solution had been found, however, owing to the fact that the Arab Union would not accede to the Baghdad Pact and that Iraq's obligations under the Pact would not extend to Jordan.⁶¹⁵ Another issue was Jordan's precondition that Hussein retain his position as commander in chief of the Jordanian armed forces. In the eyes of the Jordanian negotiators this would include the Iraqi units which were to be stationed in Jordan. The Iraqis had initially opposed this demand but eventually relented when the Jordanians persisted.⁶¹⁶ The two military issues referred to above testify to the importance of the military aspect of the Union.

A third category of problems addressed during the negotiations in Amman was the Union's financial resources and how these resources would be allocated. According to Nuri the main issue had been allocations to the armed forces. Iraq's annual military expenditures totaled £25 million while those of Jordan amounted to approximately half of this sum. Whereas Iraq's customs duties more or less balanced the military budget, Jordan's amounted to £1 million only. This clearly constituted a problem for Iraq, and Nuri had therefore expressed his hope to the American Ambassador Gallman that the United States and Britain would continue their financial aid to Jordan.⁶¹⁷ On June 21, 1958, the Union's Finance Minister stated that the deficit in the Union's budget amounted

⁶¹⁵ Falhut, Nahwa al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, pp. 117-118; Michael Ionides, Divide And Lose: The Arab Revolt of 1955-1958, pp. 234-235; al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, Mudiriyya al-Tawjih wa al-Idha'a al-'Amma (Baghdad: Matba'a al-Hukuma, 1958), p. 10, referred to in al-Fattah, Siyasat al-'Iraq al-Kharijiyya, pp. 473-474.

⁶¹⁶ Alan de Lacy Rush, ed., Records of the Hashemite Dynasties, A Twentieth Century Documentary History, Iraq: The Reign of King Faisal II, vol. 14, p. 688, the British Embassy, Baghdad to the Foreign Office, no. 427, March 13, 1958, FO371/134026, referred to in al-Shar'a, Al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, p. 129.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid.

to approximately ID1.8 million.⁶¹⁸ One explanation for the deficit may have been the fact that the Union Ministry of Defense received the lion's share of the budget, ID30.6 million, whereas ID1.5 million was allocated to the rest of the Union's government administration.⁶¹⁹ It is clear from these statistics that the United States and Britain, despite the Arab Union's considerable emphasis on military expenditures, considered the role of the Union so important in the strategic landscape of the Middle East that it warranted such support.

Generally speaking, the Union Treaty constituted an attempt to implement a far-reaching program of integration of the two kingdoms. Diplomatic relations between Jordan and Iraq ceased since the Union made them more or less redundant, but the two kingdoms' diplomatic representation in other states would remain. Furthermore, the Union Treaty stipulated that a united foreign policy be pursued, that the two armies be united, that customs barriers between the two regions be abolished, that the educational system be standardized, that financial and economic policies be coordinated, and that the federal government make efforts to introduce a united currency for the Union. In view of the great discrepancies between the two states' revenues, it was decided that Iraq would be responsible for 80 percent of the Union's budget, and Jordan 20 percent during the first fiscal year. The Union also introduced regulations to facilitate the life of ordinary

⁶¹⁸ Filastin, June 22, 1958, pp. 1, 4, referred to in al-Shar'a, Al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, p. 153. Al-Zubaidi suggests that the deficit must have been higher than ID1.8 million. He quotes one source as stating that he had learned that the United States had decided to contribute \$25 million and Britain \$4 million towards balancing the Union's budget, Muhadir Jalasat, vol. iii, p. 1146, quoted in al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz, p. 80. The following statistics illustrate how important foreign aid was to Jordan's survival as a state: Between 1951 and 1958 annual American aid to Jordan increased from \$1.4 million to \$34 million, Naseer H. Aruri, Jordan: A Study in Political Development (1921-1965) (The Hague: Martin Nijhoff, 1972), p. 63, referred to in Lawrence Tal, "Jordan," in Sayigh and Shlaim, The Cold War and the Middle East, p. 104. Furthermore, between 1952 and 1966 "[a]id accounted for up to one-third of Gross Domestic Product," Tal, "Jordan," in Sayigh and Shlaim, The Cold War and the Middle East, p. 105.

⁶¹⁹ Al-Shar'a, Al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, p. 152.

Iraqis and Jordanians. Union citizens were not required to carry a passport for travel between the two kingdoms, and they enjoyed the right to work in any part of the Union they chose.⁶²⁰

The new Union meant a number of constitutional changes for the two member states, but it did not constitute a complete change. The seat of the federal government, the Supreme Council of Ministers, would alternate between Baghdad and Amman for a period of six months at a time. Furthermore, a new Parliament with 40 members was elected, 20 Iraqis and 20 Jordanians. Each province of the Union's two regions would be represented by at least one deputy elected by and from among the deputies of the two Parliaments. The members of the federal Parliament were thus not elected directly by the people, but they were not allowed to retain their seats in the regional parliaments. Foreign relations did not undergo change to the extent that international agreements previously entered into by the individual regions remained in effect for the contracting party only.⁶²¹ Finally, the premiership of the federal government did not entail change, at least not for the Iraqis, since Nuri al-Sa'id was appointed prime minister. This had not been done without opposition, however, since the Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Samir al-Rifa'i had expressed concern about Nuri's appointment. In his view a Jordanian was entitled to the premiership, since the Iraqi King was the head of state.⁶²²

⁶²⁰ Falhut, Nahwa al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, p. 117; al-Shar'a, Al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, p. 139; al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, Mudiriyya al-Tawjih wa al-Idha'a al-'Amma, pp. 8-11, referred to in al-Fattah, Siyasat al-'Iraq al-Kharijiyya, p. 473. Al-'Arabi emphasizes the fact that the two states retained the right to pursue an independent foreign policy, al-'Arabi, Nuri Basha al-Sa'id, p. 259.

⁶²¹ Falhut, Nahwa al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, pp. 116-121; al-Shar'a, Al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, p. 138; al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, Mudiriyya al-Tawjih wa al-Idha'a al-'Amma, , pp. 8-11, referred to in al-Fattah, Siyasat al-'Iraq al-Kharijiyya, p. 473; al-'Arabi, Nuri Basha al-Sa'id, p. 259.

⁶²² Rush, Records of the Hashemite Dynasties, Iraq, vol. 14, pp. 659-660, British Embassy Amman to the Foreign Office No. 198, February 20, 1958, FO371/134025, referred to in al-Shar'a, p. 141. Nuri appointed six Iraqis and six Jordanians as ministers in his cabinet, al-'Arabi, Nuri Basha al-Sa'id, p. 260. See also

The Constitution testifies to the fact that Iraq played the leading role in the Arab Union, but this was balanced by the sovereignty each king retained in his own kingdom.

American reactions to the proclamation of the Arab Union were positive. The United States emphasized its positive reaction to the Arab Union by pledging £9 million in economic aid to the Union and a plan for the solution of its economic problems consisting in the joint British-American establishment of a Union Development Bank. Furthermore, the United States continued its economic aid to Jordan, which amounted to \$7.5 million for the second quarter of fiscal year 1958 in accordance with the Point IV program and also extended jointly with Britain military aid to the Union and Lebanon in the form of 50 military jet aircraft.⁶²³ Despite the initial positive reactions the Eisenhower

⁶²³ 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani, Tarikh al-Wizarat al-'Iraqiyya (Sida, Lebanon: Matba'a al-'Irfan, 1968), vol. x, pp. 257-258.

⁶²³ Report about the Middle East, February 1958, FO371/133823; Filastin, May 18, p. 1, and June 12, 1958, pp. 1 and 4; both sources referred to in al-Shar'a, Al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, pp. 291, 292, and 295. In a telegram dated February 6, 1958 Dulles had instructed Chargé d'Affaires Thomas Wright in Amman to convey to Hussein that the United States would regard any step towards closer ties between Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon as a positive development. Washington would, however, not comment publicly on Hussein's proposal until substantial progress had been made towards realizing the plan. The United States would also from fiscal year 1958, beginning on July 1, 1958, make \$20 million available to support the Jordanian budget and probably further assistance later. Finally, Dulles had instructed Wright to inform Hussein that Jordan's essential needs would be met, Dulles to the American Embassy, Amman, February 6, 1958, Secret, 785.5-MSP/2-458, Foreign Relations of the United States, vol. xi, p. 273. Four months after the above pledge Dulles instructed Chargé d'Affaires Wright to inform Nuri, who was in Amman at the time, that the U.S. Government had raised the U.S. aid to the Union budget to \$25 million for the period of July 1, 1958 to March 31, 1959, subject to congressional approval. Of this amount \$18.75 million would be allocated to meet the whole of Jordan's share of the budget, and the remaining \$6.25 million to meet the Iraqi deficit. Britain's contribution would amount to \$4 million, Dulles to the American Embassy, Amman, June 12, 1958, Confidential, 786.5-MSP/6-1258, Foreign Relations of the United States, vol. xi, p. 290. The following day Wright reported that Nuri had reacted with disappointment and said that he would submit his resignation. Wright commented in his report: "It is now clear as it has been to [the] Embassy for some time that AU [the Arab Union] will only become viable if US/UK, mostly US, [are] prepared to foot the bill, Wright, Embassy Amman to the Department of State, 786.5-MSP/6-1358, Foreign Relations of the United States, vol. xi, p. 291. It is obvious that Nuri had expected a larger American contribution to the Union budget and quite possible that his enthusiasm for the Arab Union was in direct proportion to external contributions to the Union budget. In mid-June Nuri had expressed his despondency about the Arab Union by emphasizing that "he was too old to preside over a non-viable state," and that he would resign unless the West made a long-term commitment to provide financial aid, Waldemar Gallman, Iraq Under General Nuri: My Recollections of Nuri al-Said, 1955-1958 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1964), p. 146. Gallman points out, however, that Nuri's despair was most likely only momentary, since he never repeated his wish to resign. Paradoxically, despite its considerable size, U.S. aid to Jordan was not popular among

administration did not extend official recognition to the Arab Union until May 28, 1958.⁶²⁴ It is possible that the delay in official American recognition was linked to the fact that the Union's Constitution was not ratified by the Iraqi Parliament until May 12.

The British reaction to the Arab Union was a radical departure from its established policy. Britain had previously opposed all Iraqi-Jordanian union plans, but had adopted a new approach to Iraqi-Jordanian efforts to form a union, following the initiation of Syrian-Egyptian unity talks. This about-turn, which consisted in encouraging King Faisal and King Hussein to meet to discuss a union between the two states, was the result of British fears that Jordan would come under Egyptian influence which would in turn lead to continued erosion of the British position in Jordan. Furthermore, the British believed that both countries' military cooperation with Britain would lead to a merger of their military staffs and that this would enable London to retain its influence in the Middle East.⁶²⁵ Finally, a Syrian-Egyptian Union might affect adversely British trade and oil interests in the Middle East—one possibility was sabotage against pipelines in Syria—and Britain's position in Iraq and the Persian Gulf.⁶²⁶ It can thus be established that the

Jordanians due to the strings they perceived the American Government attached to the aid. This applied to financial aid, projects, and technical assistance alike, since American advisors "appear[ed] to be forcing their methods and ideas on Jordanian officials," Wright to the Department of State, June 28, 1958, Secret, 785.00/6-2858, Foreign Relations of the United States, vol. xi, p. 292.

⁶²⁴ Al-'Arabi, Nuri Basha al-Sa'id, p. 261. It is worth mention that it took the United States 19 days to extend diplomatic recognition to the revolutionary government, which had overthrown the Iraqi monarchy. Britain recognized the Arab Union on February 20, that is a week after its formation, 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani, Tarikh al-Wizarat al-'Iraqiyya (Sida, Lebanon: Matba'a al-'Irfan, 1968), vol. x, p. 258.

⁶²⁵ Antuni Idin, Mudhakkirat 1951-1957 [Recollections 1951-1957], transl. Khairi Hamad (Bairut: Dar Maktaba al-Hayat, n.d.), pp. 137-138, referred to in al-Shar'a, Al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, p. 272-273. The military aspect referred to in the Arabic translation is not discussed in the English original of Anthony Eden's memoirs. See Anthony Eden, Full Circle (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1960), pp. 394-395.

⁶²⁶ Rush, Records of the Hashemite Dynasties, Iraq, vol. 14, pp. 644-646, Draft Brief for Secretary of State, Cabinet Meeting, February 18, 1958, FO371/134024, referred to in al-Shar'a, Al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, p. 274. British concerns about the pipelines passing through Syria were based on facts, since the Iraq Petroleum Company pipeline had been blown up during the Suez Crisis in 1956, Majid Khadduri, Republican Iraq: A Study in Iraqi Politics Since the Revolution of 1958 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 13.

proclamation of the United Arab Republic directly influenced Britain's policy towards the formation of an Jordanian- Iraqi union.

In the eyes of the Israeli government the forming of the Arab Union was an unwelcome event, as had been the proclamation of the United Arab Republic. By mid-February Israel was suddenly surrounded by two hostile unions, both of which shared borders with Israel. The forming of two powerful Arab unions was perceived as a serious menace to Israel's national security, since it was in her interest that the Arab world remained fragmented, weak, and unable to coordinate its military, economic, and human resources against the Jewish state. Some analysts argue that Israel did not view the Arab Union as a serious threat and therefore did not react as violently as she had to the Iraqi-Jordanian military cooperation in 1956.⁶²⁷ The facts speak to the contrary, however, as is illustrated by official statements by Foreign Minister Golda Meir and Prime Minister David Ben Gurion. At a press conference in Paris in February 1958 Meir had expressed concern about the forming of the Arab Union since it shared borders with Israel. In the foreign minister's view the Union harbored hatred against Israel and the objective of both the United Arab Republic and the Union was to increase tension in the region. An additional problem was the fact that Iraq was not party to the Arab-Israeli cease-fire agreement of 1948. Meir's concerns were echoed by Ben Gurion who stated that Israel would take appropriate action were Iraq to deploy troops to the Israeli-Jordanian

⁶²⁷ Michael Ionides, Divide And Lose: The Arab Revolt of 1955-1958 (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1960), p. 238. Al-'Arabi agrees with Ionides that the Israeli reaction was considerably less violent in 1958 than it had been in 1956. He concurs with the author of an article in the Times (of London) of February 15, 1958 that the reason for Israel's relatively mild reaction in 1958 was her fear that Jordan would accede to the United Arab Republic thereby increasing the threat to Israel's national security. Conversely, the Arab Union would focus its efforts on opposing the United Arab Republic and not Israel, al-'Arabi, Nuri Basha al-Sa'id, pp. 261-162. This argument is indeed valid to a certain extent, but it disregards the fact that many Arab leaders, including Nuri al-Sa'id, were prepared to play the Israel card whenever they could divert attention from domestic problems.

border.⁶²⁸ Ben Gurion's warning is a clear indication that Israel did not view the Arab Union as a benevolent political entity.

One would expect the Egyptian and Syrian reactions to the forming of the Arab Union to have been negative, or at least cautious, since the United Arab Republic would most likely have perceived the Arab Union as a rival. On the contrary, initial reactions in Cairo and Damascus were positive with Nasser extending recognition to the Union and sending a congratulatory message to King Faisal, who, however, did not respond in kind.⁶²⁹ On February 16, 1958 the Syrian minister of justice stated that

We find that the formation of the Arab Union between Jordan and Iraq is a step towards closer ties between the two separate parts of the Arab world and that every rapprochement of this type will facilitate the unification of different parts of the Arab nation and the forming of the great Arab state.⁶³⁰

The Egyptian and Syrian reactions to the forming of the Arab Union are ample evidence that Cairo and Damascus initially perceived the Union as a step in the right direction with

⁶²⁸ Al-Zaman, no. 6179, February 25, 1958, p. 1; Al-Sha'b, no. 4098, February 25, 1958, p. 1; Filastin, May 27, 1958, pp. 1,4; all three sources referred to in al-Shar'a, Al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, pp. 300-301. Britain made efforts to alleviate Israeli concerns by promising to protect Israel and insure that no Iraqi troops were stationed along the Israeli-Jordanian border, Rush, Records of the Hashemite Dynasties, Iraq, vol. 14. pp. 644-646, Draft Brief for Secretary of State, Cabinet Meeting, February 18. 1958, FO371/134024, referred to in al-Shar'a, p. 274. Ben-Gurion's and Meir's position on the Arab Union was in sharp contrast with the official American view which was "that a strengthening of ties among friendly Arab states would be a favorable development...We shall continue as circumstances warrant to take this position with the Israel Government...We believe that [the] last thing Iraq and Jordan want is trouble with Israel, and hope that Israel will take no action re [the] new association which will cause it difficulties in its formative stage," Under Secretary of State Christian Herter, Department of State to Embassies in Amman, Baghdad, Jidda, and Tel Aviv, Secret, 685.87/2-1358, Foreign Relations of the United States, vol. xi, p. 275.

⁶²⁹ Al-Hasani, Tarikh al-Wizarat al-'Iraqiyya, vol. x (Sida, Lebanon: Matba'a al-'Irfan, 1968), p. 203. In his reply Faisal did not refer at all to the United Arab Republic and the Arab Union extended recognition to the Arab Republic only after a union government had been formed three months later, al-Fattah, Siyasat al-'Iraq al-Kharijiyya, p. 474; Ionides, Divide And Lose, p. 235. Ionides further claims that it looked for a time as if Egyptian-Iraqi relations would improve with the creation of the United Arab Republic and the Arab Union.

Iraq had pursued a similar course on February 1 by refusing to recognize the United Arab Republic. During a visit to Amman the Iraqi Foreign Minister Burhan al-Din Basha A'yan stated on February 12, 1958 that the reason for this policy was that the United Arab Republic had been formed "by force," whereas the Arab Union, proclaimed two days later, was a "natural" union, al-Hasani, Tarikh al-Wizarat al-'Iraqiyya, vol. x, pp. 199-200. President Nasser's retorted that the Iraqi decision was based on the fact that Crown Prince 'Abd al-Ilah "regarded Syria as his possession."

⁶³⁰ Al-Hasani, Tarikh al-Wizarat al-'Iraqiyya, vol. x, p. 202, referred to in al-'Arabi, Nuri Basha al-Sa'id, p. 263.

respect to Arab unity, which would later result in a merger between the two unions.⁶³¹

Conversely, Faisal's response is a clear indication that neither he nor King Hussein entertained any such plans.

Reactions in Turkey and Iran, both Iraq's allies in the Baghdad Pact, could have been expected to be similar but they were not. In the Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes's view the Arab Union would promote peace and stability in the Middle East. Conversely, official Turkish circles were also concerned that the Union might affect Iraq's membership in the Baghdad Pact adversely, since Jordan was not a party to the Pact. It was important to Turkish leaders that Iraq remain in the Pact, since they perceived the United Arab Republic as a threat to Turkey's national security.⁶³² Iran's reactions were similar to those of Turkey to the extent that Teheran shared Baghdad's concern about Iraq's membership in the Baghdad Pact. Iran also had the additional concern that the forming of the Arab Union might fuel Arab nationalism in the Persian Gulf which might cause problems for Iranian interests in the Gulf Emirates.⁶³³ Turkish

⁶³¹ In the view of American diplomats in Baghdad there was little support among "literate" Iraqis for Arab unity in the form of "submission to [a] foreign power which Syria has chosen." Furthermore, Iraqis loyal to the regime believed that the likelihood was strong of dissatisfaction among Syrians once they realized that Egypt's interests would take precedence over those of Syria, Embassy Baghdad to the Department of State, February 21, 1958, Confidential, 786.00/2-2158, Foreign Relations of the United States, vol. xii, p. 293. A National Intelligence Estimate dated February 20, 1958 appears to have concurred in the Iraqi belief that discontent would grow in Syria, stating that Nasser would encounter "formidable problems in keeping the union together and maintaining stability within the two component states," Special National Intelligence Estimate 30-58, February 20, 1958, Secret, Foreign Relations of the United States, vol. xii, p. 41. The Intelligence Estimate assessed that the United Arab Republic would last at least a year. British diplomatic reports suggest that Nasser took a negative stance on the Arab Union. The former was quoted as having stated with regard to the Arab Union that "the collaborators of imperialism are even more dangerous than imperialism," Minute on "Nasser's open declaration of war against the Arab Union," 27 Feb. 1958, FO371/134026; also Tel Aviv to the Foreign Office, 12 Mar. 1958, FO371/133876; both sources referred to in Tal, "Jordan," in Sayigh and Shlaim, The Cold War and the Middle East, p. 115.

⁶³² Al-Difa', no. 6704, February 17, 1958, p. 1; Al-Zaman, no. 6173, February 18, 1958, p. 1, both sources referred to in al-Shar'a, Al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, p. 309; al-Shar'a, Al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, p. 311.

⁶³³ Al-Shar'a, Al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, p. 317. Substantial Iranian minorities lived in Bahrain and Kuwait and Iran even claimed these territories as part of Iran. Furthermore, Iran did not necessarily wish to see a strengthened Iraq due to the fact that Baghdad and Teheran were at variance over the international border in the Shatt al-Arab.

and Iranian reactions to the proclamation of the Arab Union show that geographic location and different agendas caused Iraq's allies to take somewhat different positions on how the Union would affect the political and strategic situation in the Middle East.

Popular reactions in Iraq to the Arab Union were mixed. According to the British Ambassador to Iraq, Sir Humphrey Trevelyan, "[m]ost of them [Iraqis] distrusted the magnitude of the financial burden on Iraq which the Union would represent."⁶³⁴ Unlike the proclamation of the United Arab Republic, the news of the formation of the Arab Union was received with indifference by the Iraqi and Jordanian public. No demonstrations took place, neither in support of nor in opposition to the Union. It is quite possible, that had the Iraqi government held a referendum offering the Iraqis a choice between accession to the United Arab Republic or to the Arab Union, the educated classes would have cast their vote for the Syrian-Egyptian union.⁶³⁵ Tribal and municipal leaders, some politicians, and newspapers not affiliated with a political party supported the Union, whereas the Ba'th Party, the Communist Party of Iraq, the Istiqlal Party, the

⁶³⁴ Ambassador Trevelyan, Baghdad to Selwyn Lloyd, no. 9, January 29, 1959, Confidential, FO371/140896. Subject: Annual Report 1958, Iraq. Report written by R. S. Crawford. A U.S. intelligence estimate dated February 20, 1958 stated that the Arab Union would face serious internal problems due to opposition among Jordan's Palestinian population and to Jordanian budget deficits, Special National Intelligence Estimate 30-58, February 20, 1958, Secret, Foreign Relations of the United States, vol. xii, p. 41. The estimate predicted, however, that the long-term prospects of the Union would be good, if it overcame initial difficulties.

⁶³⁵ George Kirk, A Short History of the Middle East (London: Bradford and Dickens, 1961), p. 299. A national intelligence estimate of February 1958 assessed that the United Arab Republic exerted a greater appeal on Arabs in the Middle East than the Arab Union and that the Arab Republic would continue to enjoy support among radicals in the conservative states, Special National Intelligence Estimate 30-58, February 20, 1958, Secret, Foreign Relations of the United States, Near East Region; Iraq; Iran; Arabian Peninsula, vol. xii (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1993). p. 41. 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani states that there was strong opposition to the Arab Union in Iraq, to which testifies an attempt on the Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Samir al-Rifa'i's life when he was visiting Baghdad to frame a constitution for the Iraqi-Jordanian union, 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani, Tarikh al-Wizarat al-'Iraqiyya (Sida, Lebanon: al-'Irfan, 1955-1958), vol. x, p. 212.

Kurdish United Democratic Party, students and the Kurds opposed the Arab Union.⁶³⁶ It is obvious that large parts of Iraqi and Jordanian society either opposed or were indifferent to the Union. This underscores the elite nature of the project, since ordinary Iraqis and Jordanians were not consulted or allowed to participate in the decision-making process.⁶³⁷

Nuri's position on the Arab Union was ambiguous. On the one hand he must have relished the fact that Jordan, unlike Syria, had not been lost to Nasser. On the other hand, he was more reactive than proactive with respect to the Arab Union until he was appointed prime minister of the Union. As established above, Hussein took the initiative to the Union and continued to play a proactive role by sending delegations to Iraq and inviting Iraqi delegations and King Faisal II to Amman. Nuri's reactive role was most likely explained by misgivings about the feasibility of the Union, in particular due to Jordan's budget deficit. These concerns had been explicitly stated when the British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd had visited Baghdad in March. The Iraqi leaders had

⁶³⁶ Al-Shar'a, Al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, pp. 205, 210. The Jordanian supporters of the Union were found among tribal and municipal leaders, and a large part of the population on the East Bank, whereas a large part of the population in the West Bank and the Palestinian refugees opposed the Union, al-Shar'a, Al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, p. 193. The British Consul in Jerusalem reported that there were no expressions of enthusiasm for the Arab Union among the Arabs in the city, A. C. Stewart to E. M. Rose, 19 February 1958, Confidential, FO371/134025, quoted in Wm. Roger Louis, "Britain and the Crisis of 1958," in Wm. Roger Louis and Roger Owen, A Revolutionary Year (London, New York, and Washington, D.C.: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd. In association with Woodrow Wilson Center Press), p. 29.

⁶³⁷ Despite popular opposition to the Union in Iraq and Jordan, all Arab states and the Arab League declared their support for it. No Arab state, however, expressed interest in joining the Union, al-Shar'a, Al-Ittihad al-'Arabi, pp. 270-271. The British Ambassador Michael Wright confirmed in a report to the Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd that the Union enjoyed support neither in Jordan nor in Iraq, Wright to Lloyd, February 25, 1958 FO371/134025, referred to in Ashton, Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser, p. 146. An American Embassy report dated February 21 confirms the lack of popular demonstrations in support of the Union. The dilemma of the government was that "popular dislike for [the] present regime is sufficiently strong so that it is hard for it to do anything which will incur public approval rather than suspicion," Embassy Baghdad to the Department of State, February 21, 1958, Confidential, 786.00/2-2158, Foreign Relations of the United States, vol. xii, p. 292. Conversely, the American Embassy did not believe that the few anti-Union demonstrations meant that it was unpopular.

been very nervous and had acted “as though they expected to be gone in six months.”⁶³⁸ Lloyd had left Iraq with the impression that the Arab Union “needed bolstering.” Such pessimistic sentiment among Iraqi leaders less than a month after the formation of the Arab Union are a clear indication that Nuri agreed to the Union with doubts in his mind, since nothing suggests that the situation in the Union had deteriorated to such an extent in less than one month that Nuri had changed his mind about the Iraqi-Jordanian Federation.

Nuri had played a secondary role to King Hussein with respect to the formation of the Arab Union, but once the Union had been proclaimed Nuri became the driving force behind the efforts to balance the Union’s budget. He was persistent in his requests for U.S. and British contributions to meet the budget deficit. In April 1958 State Department analysts anticipated that Nuri would request additional financial support, since Iraq’s predicted budget deficit for the fiscal year beginning on April 1, 1958 would amount to \$10 million.⁶³⁹ Nuri and Crown Prince ‘Abd al-Ilah were not convinced that Western support would meet the whole deficit and therefore attempted to persuade Kuwait to join the Union in order to resolve its financial difficulties. ‘Abd al-Ilah had explained to the British ambassador Wright at the end of February 1958 that in order to prevent a disaster

⁶³⁸ Dulles to the Department of State, March 11, 1958, Top Secret, 786.00/3-1158, Foreign Relations of the United States, vol. xii, pp. 294-295. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir Gerald Templer, however, saw the Arab Union in a different light: It offered the British their last chance of a continued strong presence in the Middle East, Chiefs of Staff Meeting, Confidential Annex, 7 May 1958, DEFE 4/107, referred to in Wm. Roger Louis, “Britain and the Crisis in 1958,” in Louis and Owen, eds. A Revolutionary Year, p.23.

⁶³⁹ The Iraqi Government was prevented by law to divert funds allocated to the Development Board to budget purposes. Furthermore, the blowing up of the Iraq Petroleum Company’s pipeline in Syria during the Suez Crisis in 1956 had resulted in a sharp reduction in oil revenues, Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, William Rountree to Dulles, April 16, 1958, Secret, 611.80/4-1658, Foreign Relations of the United States, vol. xii, p. 58. The fact that Nuri exerted pressure on Kuwait’s ruler to join the Arab Union and not to visit Syria and Egypt reveals how important this issue was deemed to be in Baghdad. As to Britain’s opposition to Kuwait’s accession to the Arab Union, Ambassador Wright informed the Union’s Foreign Minister Tawfiq al-Suwaidi on July 11, 1958 that London had decided to agree to Kuwait’s accession to the Union after independence and that the details would be discussed by Prime Minister Nuri and the Foreign Office in London on July 24, al-Hasani, Tarikh al-Wizarat al-‘Iraqiyya, vol. x, p. 220.

before the end of the year the West would have to provide financial support, Kuwait would have to join the Union for financial and psychological reasons, and Syria would have to be brought over by force if need be.⁶⁴⁰ This conversation illustrates how desperate the Union's position was in the eyes of 'Abd al-Ilah and supports the argument that the Iraqi leaders had accepted to form a Union with Jordan only with reluctance, since both the Crown Prince and Nuri indubitably had been aware of the financial strains to which the Union would subject Iraq.

The unofficial objectives of the Arab Union, that is the strengthening of the Hashimite dynasty, eventually led to the destruction of both the Union and the Iraqi monarchy. The direct reason for this was the unstable domestic state of affairs in Jordan, which had prompted King Hussein to request that Iraq send troops to assist him in gaining control of the situation.⁶⁴¹ As a result, two brigades of the Iraqi Army controlled by Free Officers were ordered to deploy to Jordan. This fateful order enabled the army units to enter Baghdad and overthrow the Iraqi branch of the House of Hashim on July 14, 1958. The July 14 Revolution thus testifies to the fact that the policies of Nuri and the Hashimites achieved exactly what they had intended to prevent—the fall of the Iraqi branch of the Hashimite dynasty. The reason for this disaster was the marked discrepancy between the unstated objectives of the Arab Union—to strengthen the Hashimite dynasties—and the real need for economic, social, and political reform.⁶⁴²

⁶⁴⁰ Report from Michael Wright in Baghdad to the Foreign Office on his conversation with Crown Prince 'Abd al-Ilah on 25 February 1958, FO371/134198, referred to in Mufti, p. 104. 'Abd al-Ilah had argued that at least the first two steps were required in order to save the Arab Union.

⁶⁴¹ Fathi al-'Arabi, *'Abd al-Nasir wa Tahrir al-Sharq al-'Arabi*, p. 299.

⁶⁴² Fathi al-'Arabi argues that "The proclamation of the Arab Union was not received with satisfaction by the masses in the two states. It was perceived as a Hashimite conspiracy aiming at complete control of the situation in the two countries for the benefit of the ruling Hashemite House at the expense of the interests of the people," *ibid.* Furthermore, he contends that the instability in Jordan was caused by popular rejection of the Hashimite Union. 'Abd al-Fattah concurs in this assessment of the objectives of the Arab Union 'Abd

Many historians, Arab and Western, argue that the Arab Union was mainly formed in reaction to the proclamation of the United Arab Republic on February 1, 1958, but there were two other reasons for the formation of the Union as well. The Arab Union was partly a result of an historical process which went back at least to the Iraqi-Jordanian Agreement for Alliance and Brotherhood of 1947 and the discussions between the two sides in the early 1950s. The Agreement of 1947 and the discussions of 1950-1951, analyzed above, had already provided a blueprint for a union when Egypt and Syria merged in the United Arab Republic.⁶⁴³ Furthermore, Britain exercised a restraining influence over any Iraqi-Jordanian attempt at unity. In reaction to the Syrian-Egyptian negotiations about a union treaty the British reversed their previous opposition to an Iraqi-Jordanian union. One can therefore conclude that the United Arab Republic was the principal reason for the formation of the Arab Union in February of 1958. The other two historical forces referred to—British opposition to an Iraqi-Jordanian union and an already existing Iraqi-Jordanian blueprint for such a political entity—constituted the historical continuum in which the United Arab Republic acted as a catalyst. Had the British not opposed the Iraqi-Jordanian project, a federation might have been formed as early as 1947 based on the Agreement for Alliance and Brotherhood, although the financial aspects of a federation would even then have constituted a problem.

al-Fattah, *Siyasat al-'Iraq al-Kharijiyya*, p. 479. Also, the official announcement of Iraq's withdrawal from the Arab Union supports the above interpretation. For the Arabic text of the announcement, see *Al-Waqai' al-'Iraqiyya*, 1, July 23, 1958, p. 15, referred to in al-Fattah, *Siyasat al-'Iraq al-Kharijiyya*, p. 479.

⁶⁴³ This blueprint enabled Iraq and Jordan to almost immediately follow suit with their own union, which would most likely not have been possible without the many years of preparatory work.

Arab Unity and Disunity

The failure of Nuri and the Hashimites to pursue policies which would have strengthened the Iraqi regime and prevented a revolutionary situation to build up in the country resulted in the Iraqi Revolution of 1958. The first steps of the new regime revealed the degree to which Iraqis were opposed to Hashimite rule and that the Arab Union was among the symbols of the old regime whose demise the Iraqis celebrated.

The Qasim regime's rapid decision with respect to the Arab Union reflected popular sentiments. During the first two days following the July 14 coup the military leaders announced a series of decisions doing away with unpopular policies and institutions of the old regime.⁶⁴⁴ When the new regime therefore announced on July 15 that Iraq had withdrawn from the Arab Union it certainly reflected popular opposition to the Union and its policies. The reason given for the decision was that the Union had not pursued the interests of the Iraqi and Jordanian peoples and that its intention had been to fragment Arab unity and represent the interest of the ruling clique.⁶⁴⁵ Furthermore, the early decision to withdraw from the Arab Union demonstrates how important this announcement was deemed to be by the new regime. The significance of the decision not to remain a party to the Arab Union treaty is that the Qasim government, unlike other Arab governments, adopted an approach to the Union which reflected popular sentiments in Iraq.

⁶⁴⁴ For a detailed analysis of these proclamations, see Chapter 8.

⁶⁴⁵ Al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz 1958, pp. 80, 513; Uriel Dann, Iraq Under Qassem: A Political History, 1958-1963 (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1969), p. 52. The full text of the announcement was printed in Al-Waqai' al-'Iraqiyya, no. 1, July 23, 1958, quoted in al-Zubaidi, Thawrat 14 Tammuz 1958, pp. 513-514. King Hussein waited until August 2 to acknowledge Iraq's withdrawal from the Arab Union, Dann, Iraq Under Qassem, p. 52.

In the first days and months following the Iraqi Revolution the relations between Iraq and the United Arab Republic appeared to have improved radically with the two states signing a number of bilateral agreements. Nasser had demonstrated his support for the Iraqi Revolution by placing the armed forces in both U.A.R. regions on highest alert, declaring that the Arab Republic was prepared to respond immediately to any Iraqi request for help, including military units, arms, ammunition, and aircraft.⁶⁴⁶ A meeting in Damascus between an Iraqi delegation headed by Qasim's deputy, 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif and President Nasser apparently went very well judging from the agreements signed on July 19: a cultural agreement, an agreement for complete military cooperation, and agreements for economic, trade, and technical cooperation.⁶⁴⁷ The U.A.R.-Iraqi Defense Agreement of July 19, 1958, stated that the two parties were bound by the Charter of the Arab League and the Arab League Cooperation and Security Pact and that they would stand united in the face of aggression against one or both of them.⁶⁴⁸ The Defense Agreement also stipulated that Iraq and the United Arab Republic cooperate fully in the international field to protect their rights. The U.A.R.-Iraqi Defense Agreement, in particular, demonstrated both sides' determination to establish close ties.

Despite the promising rapprochement between Iraq and the United Arab Republic one incident which took place during the meeting between Nasser and 'Arif would have serious repercussions on U.A.R.-Iraqi relations. On July 18 Nasser had delivered a speech in which he had emphasized 'Arif's leading role in the Iraqi Revolution.⁶⁴⁹ This would

⁶⁴⁶ Fathi al-'Arabi, *'Abd al-Nasir wa Tahrir al-Sharq al-'Arabi*, p. 302.

⁶⁴⁷ Al-Zubaidi, *Thawrat 14 Tammuz 1958*, p. 515. An agreement for cultural unity was signed by the two sides on October 28. Fathi al-'Arabi, *'Abd al-Nasir wa Tahrir al-Sharq al-'Arabi*, p. 302.

⁶⁴⁸ Falhut, *Nahwa al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya*, pp. 144-145.

⁶⁴⁹ Fathi al-'Arabi, p. 302. Al-'Arabi gives a very pro-'Arif account of his role in the Revolution, accusing Qasim of being an opportunist by not exposing his own life to danger, while letting 'Arif carry out the

have been a natural thing to do but for the fact that ‘Arif was not Iraq’s leader. It is quite possible that Qasim’s suspicions of Nasser’s motives began with this incident and that it was one of the reasons why the two men never met. Nasser’s failure to refer to Qasim’s role in the Revolution, while praising the latter’s deputy, was obviously an insult to Qasim. Nasser had clearly for one reason or another chosen to offend Qasim. It is simply not convincing that a leader of Nasser’s caliber would have acted unintentionally in this manner. One possibility is that ‘Arif had impressed Nasser with his staunch support for unity with the United Arab Republic, and that Nasser for this reason had decided to support ‘Arif in a situation which the U.A.R. leader believed would soon develop into a power struggle in Iraq. According to one account of the meeting between Nasser and ‘Arif the latter had referred to Qasim in deprecating terms, a circumstance which might have prompted Nasser to emphasize ‘Arif’s leadership.⁶⁵⁰ Whatever the explanation might be of Nasser’s praise for ‘Arif, it is clear that much of the blame for the subsequent tension between the United Arab Republic and Iraq must be placed at the feet of Nasser and ‘Arif.

‘Abd al-Salam ‘Arif’s activities in Iraq following his return from Damascus confirmed his opinion of himself as the leader of the Revolution and precipitated a confrontation with Qasim. Back in Iraq ‘Arif made great efforts to spread Nasser’s version of his role in the Revolution. In an interview which he granted to Radio Cairo on July 24 ‘Arif called

dangerous part of the coup plan. Al-‘Arabi relegates Qasim to a secondary role. He fails, however, to address the question of what was Nasser’s motive when he praised a subordinate to Qasim, both in military and political rank. Naturally this was interpreted as a slight by Qasim.

⁶⁵⁰ Khadduri, *Republican Iraq*, p. 87. During their meeting in Damascus Nasser had asked ‘Arif what role Qasim would play if Iraq joined the United Arab Republic, whereupon the latter had answered that “Qasim’s fate would be like that of General Neguib.” *Muhakamat al-Mahkama al-‘Askariyya al-‘Ulya al-Kubra* [Proceedings of the Special Supreme Military Court] (Baghdad, 1959-1962, vol. v), pp. 247-70. Neguib had become President of Egypt after the Egyptian Revolution in July 1952, only to be outmaneuvered by Nasser in November 1954.

himself the “leader of the command.” During the interview Qasim was not mentioned by name one single time.⁶⁵¹ ‘Arif’s activities must thus have corroborated Qasim’s suspicions raised on July 18 by Nasser’s speech in Damascus. Furthermore, ‘Arif went on a speaking tour of the country which he used as a platform to eulogize Nasser.⁶⁵² This was a situation Qasim could not condone for long. His deputy was challenging his position as the leader of the Revolution and advocating objectives which were equally challenging to his position as Sole Leader.

Paradoxically, the issue of unity was the major reason for disunity in Iraq. The tension between Qasim and ‘Arif in the first months after the July 14 Revolution was symptomatic of the issue of Arab unity which had for so long eluded the Arabs. The formation of the United Arab Republic in February 1958 had kindled the hope of pan-Arabists in the Middle East, but some Arab leaders, such as ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim, had their own view of what Arab unity entailed. Qasim was the Sole Leader and would for this reason not tolerate competition from Nasser. A second reason for Qasim’s opposition to union with the United Arab Republic was that he did not wish to turn Iraq into a province ruled from Cairo, which many believed was the case in Syria.⁶⁵³ A third likely consideration which influenced Qasim’s decision not to accede to the United Arab Republic was the strong opposition to such a union in certain parts of Iraqi society. Thus,

⁶⁵¹ Radio Cairo, July 24, 1958, quoted in Dann, Iraq Under Qassem, p. 78.

⁶⁵² Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p.817; Khadduri, Republican Iraq, p. 88.

⁶⁵³ Mahmud Riyadh, Egyptian ambassador to Syria, stated in 1961 that Egypt had not wanted union with Syria, in order to avoid accusations of annexing the Arab state, “which is exactly what happened,” Seale, The Struggle for Syria, p. 314.

when pan-Arabists and the Ba‘th Party lent their support to ‘Arif, he became a serious threat to Qasim’s authority.⁶⁵⁴

Qasim’s view on Arab unity differed radically from that of the Ba‘thists and pan-Arabists whose goal was immediate union with the United Arab Republic. An Arab nationalist, Qasim wished to establish close ties with the United Arab Republic, and he might even have accepted a Sovereignty Council with the Arab Republic and Iraq alternately presiding over the council. He would never have accepted renouncing Iraq’s sovereignty, however, as Syria had done upon her merger with Egypt.⁶⁵⁵ Unlike the pan-Arabists and Ba‘thists who advocated wahda fawriyya, immediate union with the Egyptian-Syrian Republic, Qasim repeatedly emphasized the concept of national unity in his speeches. According to Qasim himself, his personal role in the effort to achieve such unity consisted in being above political trends and working for the whole nation, not for any particular class or party.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵⁴ ‘Arif was accompanied on his speaking tour by Fu‘ad al-Rikabi, the Ba‘thist leader and Minister of Development who encouraged the former’s advocacy of Arab unity, Khadduri, Republican Iraq, pp. 88, 91. Khadduri writes that ‘Arif’s speeches were enthusiastically received by the public. The reason for this, however, was not necessarily the demand for unity, but most likely his unrealistic promises regarding an Iraqi welfare state.

⁶⁵⁵ Khadduri, Republican Iraq, p. 92; 14 July Celebration Committee 1958-1959, The Iraqi Revolution, p. 9.

⁶⁵⁶ ‘Abd al-Karim Kassem, Principles of 14th of July Revolution, pp.5, 13; Dann, Iraq Under Qassem, p. 64.

CONCLUSION

During the last decade before the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy in 1958 a revolutionary situation built up in the country, in part because of internal reasons such as suppression of opposition to unpopular economic policies and the rigging of parliamentary elections. The semi-feudal conditions in rural areas with tribal shaikhs controlling tribal lands resulted in a continuous migration of destitute but hopeful peasants and farm laborers to the cities. Once in the cities, however, these rural migrants discovered that they had traded their misereable existence under large landowners for an equally difficult life in the squalid conditions of the slums of Baghdad and other Iraqi cities where they joined the armies of their unemployed urban brethren. One reason that the migrants ended up in the sarifas was the chronic insufficient construction of new affordable housing. These conditions were fertile ground for growing revolutionary sentiments among the poorer strata of the population. In addition to the discontent among the poor, the authoritarian domestic policies of and constraints on civil liberties imposed by Prime Minister Nuri al-Sa'id greatly contributed to alienating the intelligentsia. Students in particular voiced their discontent with the slow economic progress in the country in demonstrations which were often brutally suppressed by the authorities. This violent response to public dissent only increased strife in Iraqi society.

Revolutionary sentiments were also fanned in part by external influences such as close ties with Britain, membership in the Baghdad Pact, and the Suez Crisis. Arab nationalism, and in particular its corollary, Arab unity, was the prism through which these relations and events were seen. Most Iraqi politicians and intellectuals strongly opposed the pro-West policies of the Nuri regime, since these policies resulted in Iraq's isolation

in the Arab world. The Suez Crisis underscored Nuri's dilemma: How could he continue pro-British policies against the backdrop of the French-British-Israeli attack on Egypt? Nuri settled for half-measures such as severing diplomatic relations with France instead of with Britain.

This dissertation has argued that developments in Iraq and the Middle East following the end of World War II, despite their seemingly unique character, generally manifested a continuation of historical processes which had begun earlier, or even much earlier in some cases. An example of an event which was a reflection of such processes was the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. This seemingly new development was, however, merely a manifestation of the strong British presence in the region, which had begun much earlier. Likewise, the Suez Crisis was a continuation of the tradition of heavy-handed British or American interference in regional affairs: In 1941 Britain had deposed Iran's ruler Reza Shah because of his pro-German leanings. The same year Britain had reoccupied Iraq due to that country's pro-German policies. In the following year the British had compelled King Faruq of Egypt to appoint a prime minister of their liking, by surrounding his palace with tanks. In 1953 the Central Intelligence Agency had sponsored the overthrow of Prime Minister Muhammad Musaddeq's government in Iran. Finally, in the early 1950s Britain and the United States had actively sought to create a Western-led Middle East Command or Middle East Defense Organization despite the strong opposition of the Egyptian President Gamal 'Abdul Nasser. The formation of the Baghdad Pact in 1955 came at the very high cost of intensified Arab disunity and a strong Soviet presence in the region, both of which results the Pact had purportedly been created

to prevent. These events all reflected the historically heavy-handed Western presence in the Middle East

Iraq's economy in the 1950s was based on oil revenues, which increased dramatically in 1952 with the signing of a new agreement between Iraq and the British-run Iraq Petroleum Company, stipulating that Iraq would receive 50 percent annually of the company's profits in Iraq. Nuri believed that he could resolve the country's economic and social problems by investing the oil revenues in long-term large-scale projects in the areas of irrigation and dam construction. The problem with this strategy was that the poor fallahin did not benefit from these investments, because irrigation canals were controlled by the large landowners. Furthermore, some canals had fallen into disrepair and could therefore not be used. Another disadvantage with these projects was that they would only bear fruit in several years. Both Nuri and his Western allies were convinced, however, that the Development Board, which administered the allocation of the oil revenues to development projects, was the best way to save the regime. In February of 1956 the prime minister believed this could be done within a period of two years.

Baghdad, London, and Washington erred, however, in believing that economic reforms could mollify the political opposition to the regime. The influx of oil revenues made Nuri less inclined to introduce political reforms in Iraq, since he became less dependent on taxes for this purpose, a fact which convinced those opposed to Nuri's policies of his inflexibility and determination to restrict civil liberties. An estimated network of 24,000 agents reporting on conversations from teashops to colleges and the fact that the budget of the police exceeded that of the Ministry of Education served to

reinforce the impression that Nuri was running a police state. It is difficult to see how Nuri could possibly have coopted the political opposition.

Despite the curtailment of civil liberties the press occasionally criticized corruption and backwardness in rural areas, and even reported anti-government demonstrations. Furthermore, a person familiar with Iraqi history and politics could thanks to veiled criticism and by reading between the lines get a good idea of the sentiments of the Iraqi public. British and American diplomats were therefore able to draw fairly accurate conclusions about the true situation in the country. Most British and American analysts, however, downplayed the ominous signs in Iraqi newspapers more or less subscribing to Nuri's assessment that bread is more important than politics. The problem was that these Western diplomats took Nuri's over-confident assurances regarding the stability of the regime at face value and placed too much trust in the development program.

Had Western diplomats realized how serious the situation was in Iraq, they would most likely still not have been able to exert sufficient pressure on Nuri to introduce long overdue political reforms. British and American influence in Iraq only went so far. Evidence to this effect is the fact that the British had failed to compel Nuri to introduce necessary reforms in the early 1940s when they were in control of Iraq due to the occupation of the country in World War II. The fact that the social ills besetting Iraq in the 1950s were still the same as a decade earlier was ample evidence that Nuri had not heeded the advice of the British, not even when they were in control of the country. This leads one to conclude that the British and the Iraqi public over-estimated Britain's ability to exert influence over Iraqi politics. Another reason for the limited British and American influence was the fact that neither power wished to press too hard for reform, since such a

course of action could have unforeseen results such as a nationalist government assuming power and reorienting Iraqi foreign policy towards the Soviet Union. Finally, Nuri's hands were tied to a certain extent by his conservative power base. Understandably he was reluctant to run the risk of upsetting his constituency by introducing reforms which would reduce their influence.

Nuri's foreign policy greatly contributed to destabilizing the Middle East. His primary objective was to secure the leading position in the Arab world for Iraq. This goal was to be achieved in two ways: (a) through an alliance with Britain, the military cooperation with which was subsequently expanded to the Baghdad Pact in 1955; and (b) through the realization of his Fertile Crescent project, an Iraqi-Syrian-Jordanian federation. These objectives clashed with the interests of Egypt. The importance of Syria is reflected in Nuri's and Nasser's belief that Syria was key to the ability to isolate the rival. President Gamal 'Abdul Nasser strove to be the leading player in the Arab world, pursued neutralist policies aiming at eliminating the military presence and influence of the Western powers in the Middle East, and unleashed a violent propaganda campaign against Nuri al-Sa'id. The campaign was highly embarrassing to Nuri because it largely advocated policies which the Iraqi opposition had long embraced, thus securing the support of Nuri's enemies for Egypt's position. In all fairness, however, it should be pointed out that Nuri's policies were not the only factors which destabilized the Middle East and led to his undoing. The British attack on Egypt in 1956 created considerable instability in the region and weakened Nuri's position as much as any of his own policy decisions.

Nuri's attempt to realize the Fertile Crescent project led to interventionist policies in Syria. The Iraqi prime minister firmly believed in the idea of regime change in Syria in order to enable Baghdad to form a federation with Damascus, and supported pro-Iraqi forces in Syria with money and propaganda, conspiring against the Syrian government. A plan was even drawn up in 1954 to use military force to topple the Syrian government. London and Washington, however, discouraged Nuri from using military force to achieve his objectives, preferring covert action to bring about a change in Syria's leftist policies. Nuri's attempts to destabilize Syria were a challenge to Nasser's position in the Arab world. The former's policies towards Egypt and Syria in the mid-1950s eventually led to an uprising against him, and the strengthening of the domestic opposition, greatly contributing to the Iraqi Revolution in 1958. The Iraqi-Egyptian rivalry in Syria ended with the proclamation of the United Arab Republic in 1958 and Nuri's complete defeat.

Nasser was a difficult target for Nuri's propaganda. The reasons for this were Nasser's anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist propaganda, with which Nuri could not compete. The former could attack with impunity the Western powers. Conversely, Nuri could only attack France for its policies in Algeria, but not his allies, Britain and the United States. With regard to Israel, Nuri could not match Nasser's cross-border raids. The Iraqi leader thus had a clear disadvantage in the Iraqi-Egyptian propaganda war, since Nasser's acts and propaganda were much more appealing to Arab public opinion.

Considering the aforementioned situation in Iraq the question which needs to be asked is whether, inspite of all the serious problems which Nuri was facing, the Iraqi Revolution could have been averted. Having a background as an officer in the Ottoman army Nuri was prone to seek authoritarian solutions to political problems. His basic

approach to Iraqi politics was therefore not to introduce reform but to maintain and make more efficient an already existing authoritarian system. Nuri had alienated a majority of the population with his policies and enjoyed support from only a tiny minority of wealthy Iraqis. This circumstance combined with his dismissal of threats to the regime made it highly unlikely that he could have averted the revolution by changing his policies.

Diplomatic reports reveal that some British diplomats in Baghdad believed Britain could influence the appointment of a pro-British but more reformminded prime minister. This conclusion reflected wishful thinking. The reason is that the public would sooner rather than later have discovered that their new prime minister was Britain's man, which would effectively have reduced his standing to that of a collaborationist. The British diplomats should have realized that their approach to Iraqi politics was that of a bygone era and that the Suez Crisis served as an example of this truism. British policies in Iraq thus made Britain part of the problem instead of part of the solution. The reason was that the British wanted to retain their position as a major player in Iraqi and Middle Eastern politics.

The Americans possessed even less ability than the British to change the direction in which Nuri's policies were moving due to their deference to the British on matters concerning Iraq. The former could possibly have threatened to discontinue U.S. military aid to Iraq, but they feared that "too much change" in Iraq could possibly strengthen the Soviet position in the region. According to the coup leader 'Abd al-Karim Qasim himself, however, one thing could have prevented the July 14 coup—a strong Western military presence in the Middle East. This implies that had U.S. Marines landed in Lebanon before July 14, 1958, the coup would most likely have been postponed.

Nuri's persecution of the civilian political opposition left the army the only sufficiently powerful and well-organized force which could bring about change in Iraq. Opposition to the Iraqi monarchic regime in the officer corps originated in the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, which in the eyes of some Iraqi officers had been prosecuted poorly. The first Free Officers cells emerged in the early 1950s when several groups independently of one another formed around a small number of officers, and coalesced in a Supreme Committee in November of 1956. The question here is: Why was the Free Officers movement more successful than the civilian opposition in escaping the attention of the regime? First, the civilian opposition operated openly much of the time by organizing demonstrations, whereas the Free Officers movement was a clandestine organization. Second, Nuri dismissed intelligence reports to the effect that the Free Officers were plotting against him. He clearly over-estimated the loyalty of mid-rank officers.

One major problem of the Free Officers movement was that it was not a cohesive movement. The Free Officers on the Supreme Committee were at variance on many issues. They were, however, agreed upon the necessity of an Iraqi revolution and of postponing making decisions on issues upon which they disagreed. This circumstance produced an action program which had two consequences: (a) prior to the Revolution it held the Free Officers together; and (b) after the Revolution it allowed each one of the officers on the Supreme Committee to read their own personal agendas into the movement's program, which eventually led to rebellions and coup attempts.

The divisions within the Supreme Committee also led to a coup within the military conspiracy against the Nuri regime. The coup leader Brigadier 'Abd al-Karim Qasim

made a decision to conceal his coup plan for July 14 from most of his fellow Free Officers. This fact incensed many of his colleagues who rapidly found themselves outmaneuvered from all positions of influence after the coup. The manner in which Qasim executed the coup thus served to destabilize Iraq following the July 14 events. There were at least three reasons for Qasim's decision not to involve other Free Officers than his closest confidants: (a) he had seen too many coup plans fail already, some of which due to personal rivalries among the officers; (b) Qasim did not trust some of the other members on the Supreme Committee; and (c) he saw himself as the most qualified candidate for the post as coup leader, and the only officer who was above political rivalries. In his mind there were thus a number of weighty reasons for not taking other Free Officers on the Supreme Committee into his confidence.

The events of July 14 constituted the initial phase of a revolution. It is clear from what transpired on July 14, prior to this date and after this date, that the coup executed by the Free Officers was not a typical military coup. It was a coup supported by the overwhelming majority of Iraqis. The presence in the streets of Baghdad of at least 100,000 demonstrators supports the argument that the events of July 14 constituted a revolution. These huge numbers of Baghdadis would have prevented any loyalists from gaining access to the key buildings occupied by the insurgents, since the demonstrators filled the streets in the center of the capital. Their support for the new regime also discouraged any intervention which Western powers might be contemplating. Finally, the majority of the demonstrations were spontaneous, which further underscores the importance of popular participation in the coup.

The conspirators' contacts with political leaders prior to July 14 and the former's actions during the following several days further testify to the revolutionary character of the coup. Furthermore, the coup leaders had solicited the assistance of opposition leaders for the eventuality that the loyalist would offer resistance. Qasim also consulted civilian leaders and included leading opposition politicians in his first cabinet although he reserved the key posts for himself and his deputy 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif. A change in the system of government from monarchy to republic, and a declaration on the morning of July 14 to the effect that the semi-feudal economic relations which ruled economic and social life in rural areas had been abolished testify to real and intended revolutionary change in Iraqi society.

Domestic policies of the new regime constituted such a radical departure from those of the Nuri regime that they can be termed a revolution. An Agrarian Reform Law limited the size of land holdings. It had limited success in redistributing land holdings from the large landowners to poor fallahin, however, due to the time-consuming procedures and shortage of skilled professionals to implement the Law. Civil liberties such as freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right for workers to organize in trade unions also constituted a fundamental change. Furthermore, the right to participate in demonstrations gave the poorer strata of the population a sense of empowerment, which they had never enjoyed under the old regime when the interests of the wealthy few had been the priority of policymakers.

The complete reorientation in the foreign relations of the Republic of Iraq can also be termed revolutionary. On the first day of the revolution the pro-West policies of the Nuri regime had been replaced with the principle of neutralism. Qasim expanded political,

economic, and military relations with the socialist countries. All such relations had been banned under the previous regime. Relations with the socialist countries held out the possibility of barter trade, and the acquisition of inexpensive arms. These prospects appealed to the new regime, which was making efforts to reduce Iraq's dependence on the West.

International reactions to the Iraqi Revolution were mixed. The United Arab Republic and the socialist countries welcomed the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy. The former saw this event as a victory for anti-imperialist forces in the Middle East, and the latter interpreted the revolution as a victory for the socialist camp. Britain and the United States quickly realized that the coup leaders enjoyed strong popular support and therefore abandoned initial plans to intervene militarily. Conversely, Jordan and Iraq's regional allies in the Baghdad Pact took a much more aggressive stance on military intervention. They even had to be restrained by Washington. There were obvious reasons for King Hussein of Jordan to take a firm stance on Iraq: The revolution meant that financial aid, to which Jordan was entitled as part of the Arab Union, would be cut.

One area in which the Iraqi Revolution did not constitute a fundamental change was the realization of Arab unity. The Syrian-Egyptian United Arab Republic proclaimed on February 1, 1958 had been received with great enthusiasm in the Middle East. In the eyes of Prime Minister Nuri and Crown Prince 'Abd al-Ilah, and King Hussein of Jordan, however, the Arab Republic posed a serious threat to Iraq's national security and to political stability in Jordan. As a result the Jordanian-Iraqi Arab Union was formed two weeks after the proclamation of the Syrian-Egyptian merger. Syria's initiative to merge

with Egypt into one state had thus greatly increased tensions between Iraq and Egypt, and caused even deeper division in Arab ranks than previously.

The initially warm relations between Iraq and the United Arab Republic following the revolution made the hope for an Iraqi accession to the Arab Republic seem quite realistic. This impression quickly changed, however, when a power struggle erupted between ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim and his deputy ‘Abd al-Salam ‘Arif. The former advocated the principle of wataniyya, nationalism which emphasized the sovereignty of Iraq, while the latter was a proponent of qawmiyya, nationalism which emphasized the linguistic and cultural unity of all Arabs, with its political corollary of pan-Arabism, that is Arab unity in one single state. Qasim outmaneuvered ‘Arif, but this would prove a Pyrrhic victory because of the ensuing political instability in Iraq, and impede the efforts to implement the program of the revolution.

Iraqi developments in the 1950s had important repercussions on the internal situation as well as Iraq’s relations with other Arab states and foreign powers. Ideological-strategic considerations in Baghdad, Cairo, London, Washington, and Moscow contributed greatly to the polarization of Iraqi and other Arab societies. The blame for this division in the Arab world cannot be exclusively laid at the feet of the Western powers, since Nuri and Nasser, and to a lesser extent Qasim share the responsibility for the direction events took in the Middle East. It is clear that had ideology and strategic considerations been de-emphasized, tensions between East and West in the Middle East, and between Arab leaders, would certainly have decreased. Given conflicting interpretations of Arab unity and the prevailing Cold War distrust between the Soviet Union and the Western powers, however, such a possibility seemed remote indeed. Furthermore, Nuri and Nasser were so

deeply entrenched in their ideological and strategically motivated positions that they found it next to impossible to modify their stance on a number of issues, such as the Baghdad Pact and neutralism. It is clear that had Nasser and Qasim succeeded in somewhat reducing their inflated egos they could quite possibly have reached a compromise which would have satisfied both sides, since Qasim would have accepted a federation with the United Arab Republic with common foreign, defense, and educational policies, and complete Iraqi sovereignty with regard to domestic affairs.

It is abundantly clear from the arguments advanced in this dissertation that Iraqis, other Arabs, and policymakers in London, Washington, and Moscow could have learned many valuable lessons from Iraqi history of the 1950s. Iraqis could have realized that they had a golden opportunity to create a national identity during this period. The experiments in Arab unity and conflicts over various degrees of Arab unity could have led to a realization that fundamental differences existed among Arab states and that efforts to achieve Arab unity should have taken these differences into account. Furthermore, Cold War rivals had ample opportunity to reach an agreement which would have reduced tension in the Middle East. Finally, Iraqi history of the 1950s provides an obvious lesson to be learned for powers currently involved in Iraq: policies based on self-interest and disregard for or ignorance of Arab sensitivities have a tendency to unite Arab public opinion, which under the circumstances is a more important consequence than the failed efforts to build Arab unity from the top down. A unified Arab public opinion was in the 1950s a more powerful force than Arab political unity ever was. This is obviously a good reason for building a relationship based on true equality and mutual respect.

Table 1. Iraqi oil revenues 1950 – 1960.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Million Iraqi Dinars</u>	<u>Barrels per day</u>
1950	5	140,000
1952	40.8	n/a
1953	49.9	n/a
1955	74	700,000
1956	68.8	n/a
1957	48.9	n/a
1958	83.8	625,000
1960	95	970,000

Sources: The Iraq Times, August 2, 1958, January 12, 1959; Office Memorandum from J. Bruce Hamilton, IRA/DFI to Cumming, INR, July 14, 1958, Secret, 787.00/7-1458, Subject: The Iraq Crisis, Part II: Implications for Oil supplies; Abbas Alnasrawi. The Economy of Iraq: Oil, Wars, Destruction of Development and Prospects, 1950-2010 (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1994. p. 11; Wm. Roger Louis. "The British and the Origins of the Revolution," in The Iraqi Revolution of 1958: The Old Social Classes Revisited, edited by Robert A. Fernea and Wm. Roger Louis (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1991), p. 45; Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett. "The Social Classes and the Origins of the Revolution," in The Iraqi Revolution of 1958: The Old Social Classes Revisited, edited by Robert A. Fernea and Wm. Roger Louis (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1991), p. 128 (Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett state that the oil revenues in 1958 amounted to ID79.9 million).

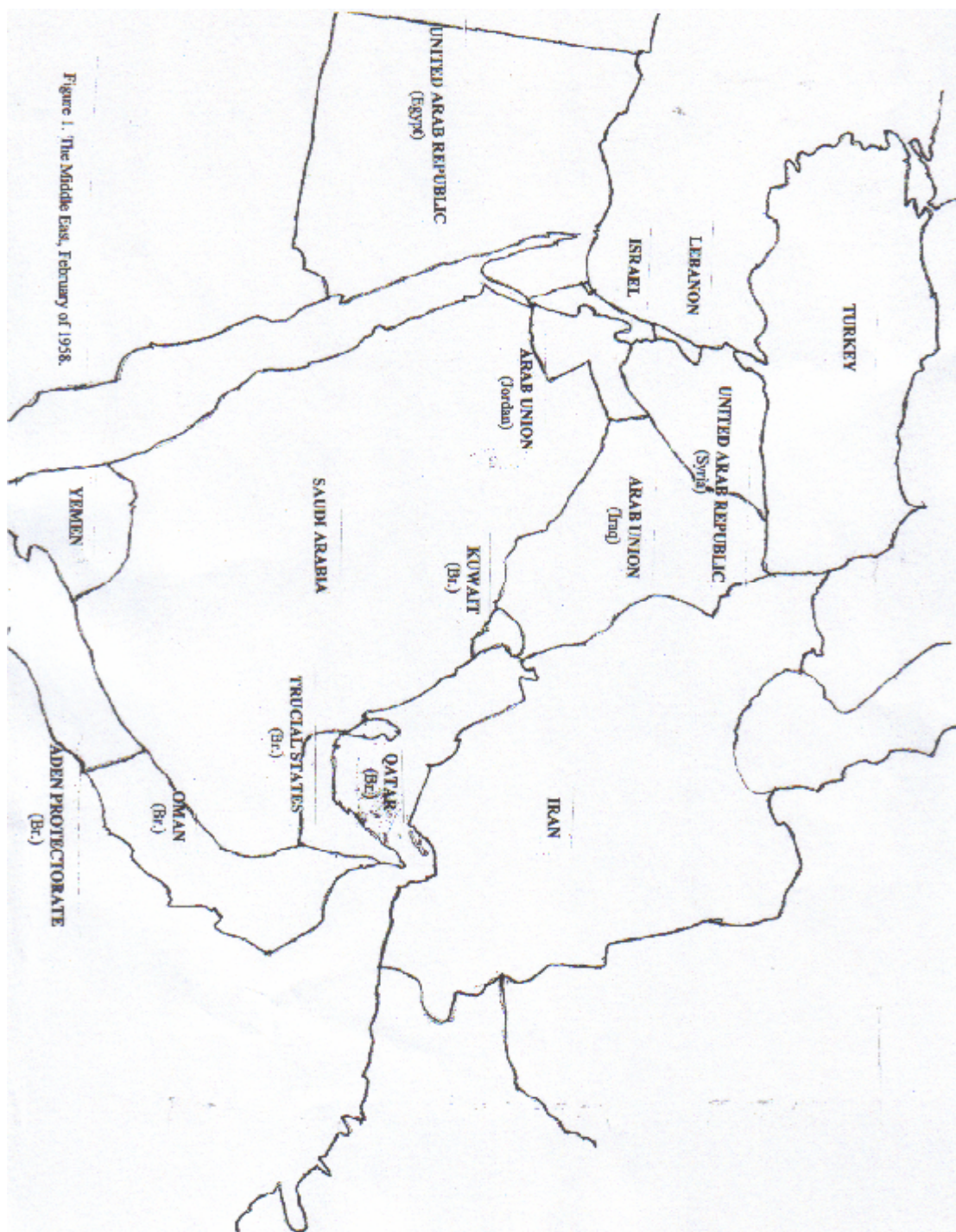


Figure 1. The Middle East, February of 1958.

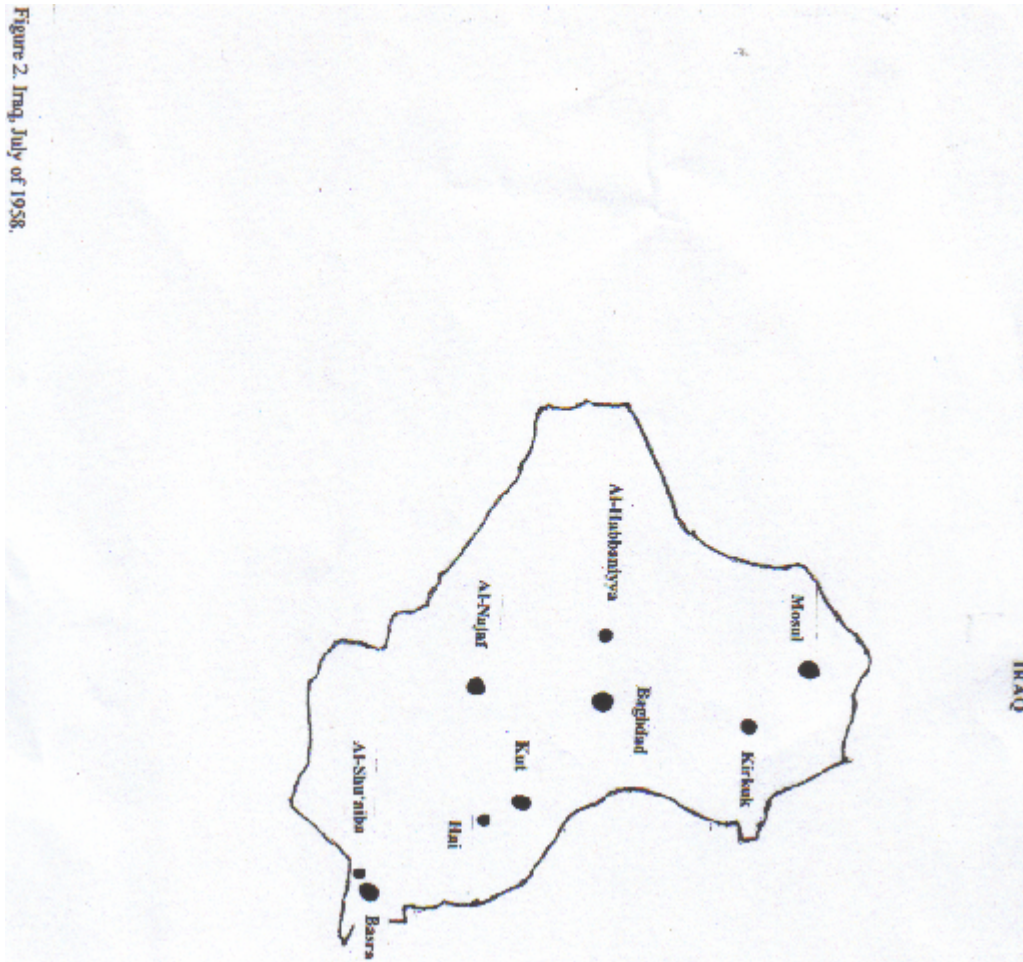


Figure 2. Iraq, July of 1958.

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VITA

Juan Lennart Michel Romero was born in Casablanca, Morocco on September 3, 1952, the son of Birgit Romero and Joaquin Romero. After completing his high school and university education in Sweden he traveled extensively working as a guide, teacher, interpreter, and translator in several countries. In January 2000 he entered the Graduate School of the University of Texas.

Permanent Address: 2201 S. Lakeline Blvd., Cedar Park, Texas 78613.

This dissertation was typed by the author.